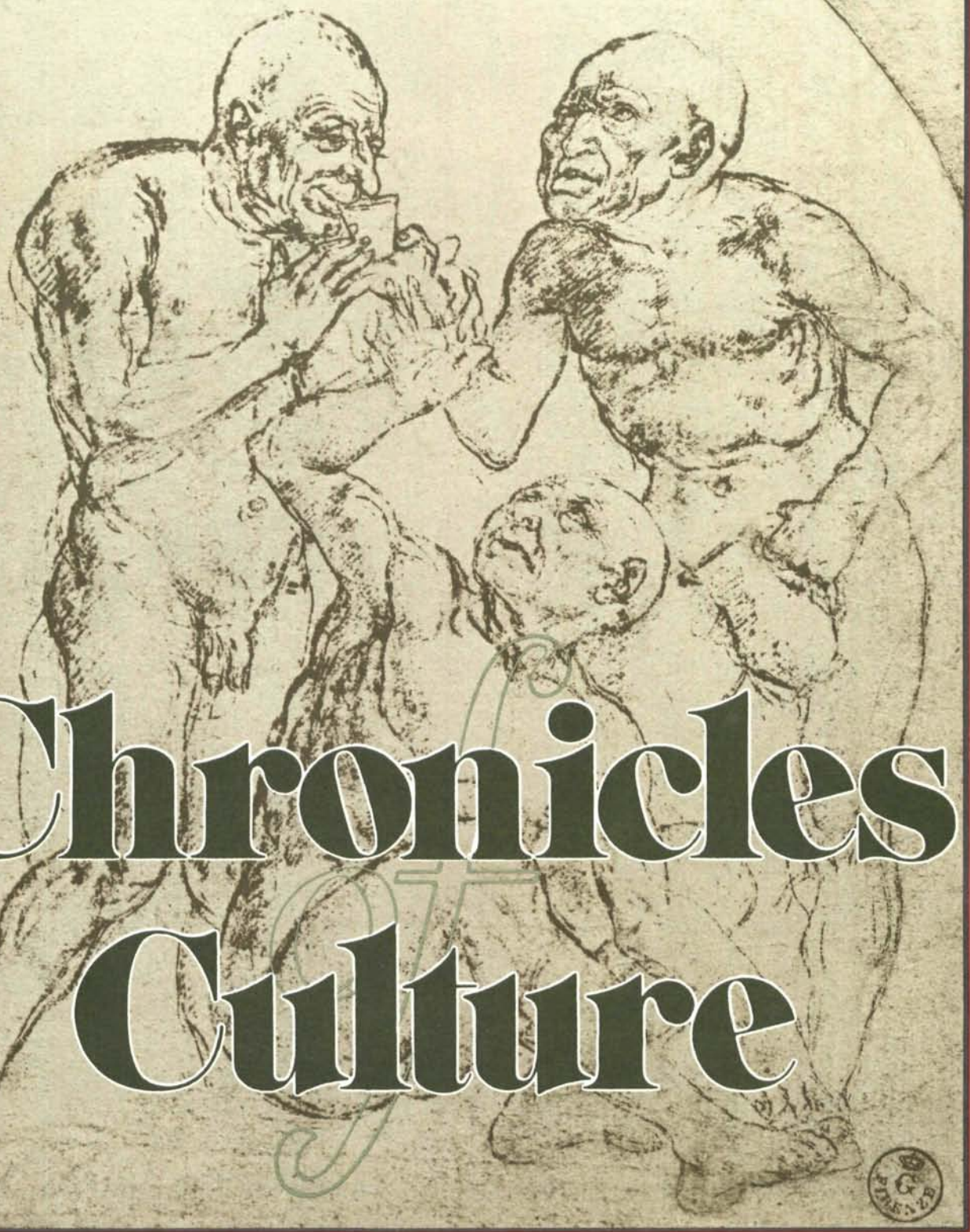
The Haves, Have-Nots and Have-Somes



Chronicles of Culture

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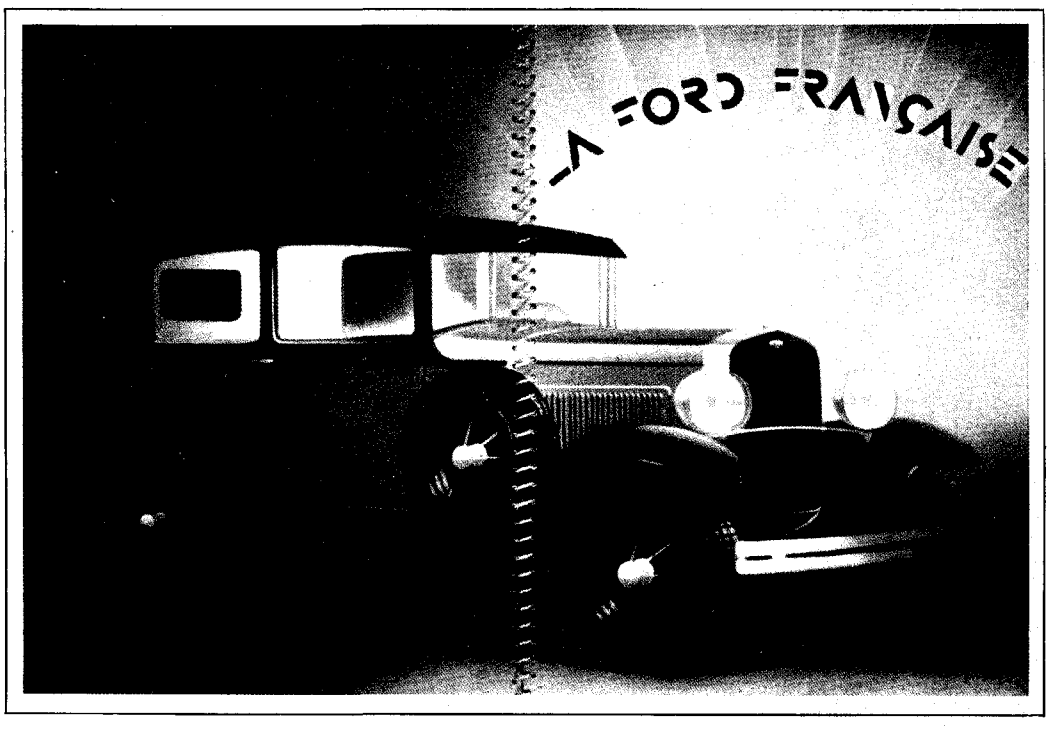

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

From our observation point near the end of the 20th century, it looks as if the economic vision of the future is going to be determined not by a struggle between the haves and the have-nots—a widespread belief 100 years ago—but by a more complex and perverse, tripartite conflict between haves, have-nots and have-somes. It will be a murky contention in which controversial ideas and enigmatic feelings, unpredictable impulses and obscure sensitivities will make the old Marxian projection of class warfare between the exploited poor and the rich bloodsuckers look like an exercise in naiveté.

* * *

At the core of the contest—which we hope will never turn to violence in America—are the notions of economic activism, economic gratification and economic entitlement. These are far from being mere economic considerations: human sensibilities, sentimentalities and ambitions determine them as well, not to mention human greed, moral fiber, sinfulness and idealism. The front lines, enmities and alliances in this tug of war will frequently waver. We will see the haves embracing the have-nots' causes with either misty-eyed dimwittedness or wily hypocrisy. We will see the have-somes portrayed as mankind's evil foe, although by sheer force of numbers they constitute the bulk of mankind.

* * *

This ever-increasing complexity will put the American businessman (the most vital link between the have-somes and the haves) into a special mental situation. The American businessman is wont to think that the eventual solutions to his problems—and he seems to have many—must be simple ones. He believes that the complexity of human affairs is all muddle and confusion, artificially intellectualized hair-splitting, and that social problems should be solvable by political means. He is fond of thinking that if only he were left alone to do his economic thing, everybody would recognize his social usefulness and virtues. A proper political party and correct administrative policies loom in his mind as the ultimate answers for restoring to him his ancient status and opportunities.

He is wrong, of course. Capitalism's woes are obviously complex, abstruse, noneconomic and nonpolitical in both nature and substance. Unless the American businessman—the only creature on earth who, by thinking and acting properly, can save both the haves and the have-nots and give a sense of fruitful existence to the have-somes—stops accusing those of us who are on *his* side of befuddling the issues and bewildering him, he is doomed to perish, we're sorry to say.

* * *

Capitalism, which triumphed originally by telling the individual that he could make the world a better place by way of work, thrift, honest service and a quality product, is in retreat, and not because history has proved its message wrong. The opposite is true: because its proposition proved to be a success, it was challenged by those who did *not* consider individual progress through work and thrift to be a value. Their main weapons were, and still are, politics and culture. They craved power over human souls and decided to wrest that power from the producers and providers by accusing them of sins rooted in greed, ambition and enterprise. They preached to the have-nots—who always have and always will exist, economic efforts notwithstanding—that by transferring the process of economic decision-making to noneconomic constructs like scholarship, government and political organizations humanity could achieve its oldest dream: economic plenty for all. A curious situation evolved: the more capitalism thrived, the more it engendered learning, social services, versatile political and cultural activities—all of which were used against capitalism. It was invariably termed a moral argument: capitalism was accused of breeding injustice.

Naturally, what was at issue was not justice but power. Sometime in our lifetime, the enemies of capitalism correctly deduced that capitalism had bred something much more loathsome to them—namely the have-somes, that is, a stratum of people who were less concerned with economic justice than with the rationality of human socioeconomic endeavors. And this kind of people, grounded in the consciousness of enrichment through work as a precious and permanent human value, will always thwart any effort to erase capitalism from mankind's preferences and aspirations.

* * *

It's easy to fume about money's power—using expressions like mammon and the almighty dollar—as the core of human ills, failures and wickedness. But when a society or a nation has been structured on antieconomic ideals and goals such as faith in man, or a purely spiritual sense of mission, it has generally ended in cruel oppression and slaughter. In crude terms, the American have-somes are the only social class which nurtures a refined faith in both man and the dollar.

The loss of faith in man and in the dollar during the 1960's and 70's was perhaps the direst peril ever to both capitalism and the American civilization. As it is doubtful whether faith in the dollar can soon be restored, the best American capitalism can undertake is to revive faith in man as a free and productive agent—and make it a capitalistic credo. In order to stave off the liberal disintegration of our culture, an ideology must be built around democratic capitalism in America—with democratic capitalism as its dialectical center. Not until the American businessman learns about his own temptations, humanizes his failings, develops intuition, finds pride in himself, under-

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stands that *Penthouse* is not merely a successful business venture but also a source of capitalism's demise, and that profit made on selling deadly technology to the Soviets is not profit at all—will we be able to discuss the renaissance of capitalism. Class consciousness did not work for the worker, but it may work for the businessman.

Some would label such a proposition a throwback to Puritan ethics. Perhaps it is. Everything indicates that if it is ever resurrected, it will be brought about by the have-somes, with both the haves and the have-nots rabidly protesting in unison its social actualization.

* * *

Economic democratization, which Marx hailed as the proletariat's gift to the universe, had already materialized in America during the 19th century. To Marx, it was inseparable from capitalism's demise. In fact, economic democratization occurred *because* of capitalism. In contemporary societies constructed on the Marxian premise, the economy is feudal and economic justice is a myth. Those societies are the only ones on earth which have preserved intact the haves/have-nots arrangement, with nothing in the middle. Of course, officially, there are no haves there. According to the official version, there are only have-somes—which is a lie. In point of fact, in a social reality where everybody can be deprived of everything by a simple bureaucratic *ukase* there are only have-nots.

* * *

Nelson Algren, the eminent liberal writer who died not long ago, wrote scornfully in *The Man with the Golden Arm,* his most impressive novel, about "the great, secret and special American guilt of owning nothing, nothing at all . . ." Algren had it all wrong. The power and moral value of the have-somes is rooted in this feeling of guilt: it's their glory and their best entitlement to a place in history. The undoing of the haves and the have-nots is due exactly to the fact that their feelings of guilt have been hopelessly messed up. The haves have neuroses or psychoses; the have-nots have rage. The have-somes feel guilty about not having enough—which is the only positive, productive, constructive anxiety among all the contemporary economic feelings.

* * *

Balzac was perhaps the first to understand that entitlement—the most pervasive socioeconomic postulate of the last two centuries—must have a moral foundation. The aristocratic demand for privilege through birth was wrong, but the bourgeois claim for the fruits of hard work, inventiveness, the spirit of industriousness, innovation and accumulation was right. Today, Balzac would bank on the American have-somes.

LIBERAL CULTURE

Now We Know

Who is responsible for the dissolution of the family and the marriage-oriented culture in America? The answer is furnished by the Public Broadcasting System. Here is how a program on PBS is advertised in a TV supplement to your local family newspaper:

Military Wives

Broke, lonely, isolated, surrounded by violence: this is the tragic story of military wives who are fighting to keep together marriages that the faceless military-industrial complex is trying to destroy.

PBS is a television channel which is founded and funded by the U.S. government. In its opinion, the government *and* the military-industrial complex are wretched accomplices in the aforementioned crime. PBS gets money from both. PBS would seem to be trying to destroy military wives. What's wrong with *that* reasoning? □

* * *

More than a century ago, Marx declared that he was on the side of the have-nots. Many before him had thought the same, but he was the first to build a powerful philosophy and moral theory around his conviction. It didn't help the have-nots much in terms of improving their condition, but it made them the focal point of modern culture, of contemporary moral concerns that are always passionate and occasionally noble, and of political initiatives. First and foremost, Marx's theory transformed the have-nots into paradigms of human goodness and innocence, abused and oppressed by countless villains.

The have-somes, who are the most constructive and virtuous social class in history, still await their Marx.

* * *

The gist of Marxian and radical reasoning has always been the moral assertion that wealth amassed by a capitalist is undeserved. The capitalist's riches, this argument goes, created a social and moral evil which ultimately depraves and degenerates humanity.

Even if we accept, for instance, that Victorian-era disproportion of income was inherently bad, the question still emerges: What was the society getting from the situation? The answer is: The bourgeois ideology and civilization, based on a lot of ethical precepts, even if many of them turned out

(continued on page 50)

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Nixon Is the One or The Giant Clash of Ethics

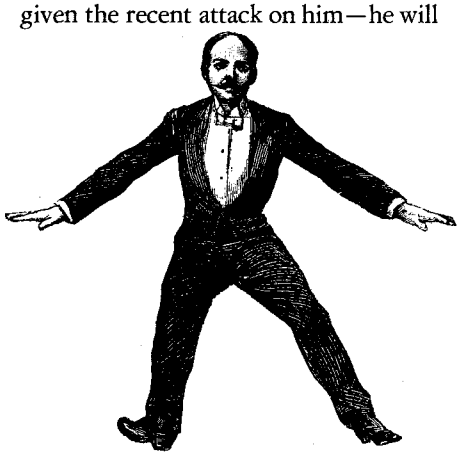
Godfrey Hodgson: *All Things to All Men: The False Promise of the Modern American Presidency;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by John C. Caiazza

This is an interesting, informed and well-written book about the problems that beset the American Presidency; unfortunately, it is also a myopic and tendentious book, amounting to a British Laborite's view of what's wrong with America. (Hodgson is an English historian and reporter who has written about Washington for 18 years for a variety of British media outlets, including the *London Sunday Times* and the BBC.) The book presents in detail a thesis that is increasingly accepted (see *Newsweek's* January 16 cover story), i.e. that the American people look to the Presidency for things it cannot deliver because it isn't powerful enough to effect needed social change and because it is isolated from the pressures and realities of modern life. The problems are seen as institutional and not as the failure of any one President such as Kennedy, Roosevelt or Johnson. Although Hodgson's analysis is rich in detail and based on his own direct observations as a reporter, and even though it is supplemented with insights from such scholars as Neustadt and Rossiter, he comes to no definite conclusion about the causes of this failure, nor does he offer any clear solution for it. Instead, he simply repeats his theme that the Presidency promises too much (cannot therefore be "all things to all men"), and all he can suggest is that the American people have to learn to expect less from the President, from Congress and from politics in general.

"What has Dublin done to have deserved such a Lord Mayor?" someone once asked William Butler Yeats, to which he replied, "What has the Lord Mayor done to deserve Dublin?" Indeed. There is a relationship between the character of a people and the kind of leadership it gets. The American people get the leadership they deserve, it has been said; what did we do to deserve Johnson, Nixon, Carter and, yes, Kennedy? Some fault must lie in ourselves, not just in events and the personalities of the men who have reached that office. In that case, the issue is moral and psychological, and only a little bit political. Hodgson knows this; commenting on various proposals to reform the electoral process, such as a national primary, he says, "Nobody should expect too much in the way Presidents are chosen." The fault, then, with *All Things to All Men* lies not really in its leftward political slant but in its not seizing on the underlying causes of the effects which Hodgson has described so well.

What has Hodgson left out of his account? There are at least three things, I think, including the election and program of Ronald Reagan. This may seem unfair since Hodgson wrote the book before Reagan became President, but Reagan's tenure, in fact, can provide a test case for Hodgson's thesis. That is, if Reagan can instill a mood of confidence in the country, slow inflation, restore some prestige to the Presidency and serve a full eight years—a tall order given the recent attack on him—he will have disproved Hodgson's thesis that the Presidency is overextended. In order to evaluate Reagan's chances, however, it is necessary to develop an historical perspective that Hodgson neglects: the extraordinary impact of Richard Nixon's Presidency.



That Hodgson neglects Nixon's impact is not surprising, for he has an advanced case of Nixonophobia—that dread disease which afflicts so many of our brethren on the left—complete with its collateral symptom of Kissingeritis. Hodgson can barely credit Nixon with having done anything for the national good, seeing instead malevolence and greed as Nixon's motives for action. Thus, Nixon's impoundment of funds appropriated by a Democratic Congress for bloated programs Hodgson sees simply as a threat to the separation-of-powers doctrine, not as an attempt to control the inflationary effects of government spending. An even greater lapse in his perception: he fails to recognize that 1968 was a watershed election in American history, on a par with the election of 1932 which brought in FDR and the Democratic coalition. That coalition—as we all know by now—of left-wing intellectuals and labor, of urban north and rural south, of blacks and rednecks gave Democrats effective political control of this country for nearly two generations. It was knit together by a progressive ideology: expansion of the welfare activities of the federal government, expansion of the economy through deficit spending, the growth of union power and civil-rights activities. Critics charged that the interests of the members of the coalition were at odds with one another and that the progressive ideology contained some gross flaws. It did not matter, though, for as long as the coalition was perceived to be working, the Democrats ruled.

Eventually, of course, the coalition failed. It is a commonplace to contrast

Dr. Caiazza is an administrator at the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

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that liberal ideology with the conservative one fashionable in Washington today. Neither liberals nor conservatives, however, want to recognize that the breakdown of the old and the triumph of the new took place not in 1980, but in 1968, for it was in that year that the ghost of Franklin Roosevelt was laid to rest at the Democratic Convention in Chicago—dividing the Democratic Party beyond repair and guaranteeing the election of Richard Nixon. Consider: Nixon was the first President who ran without the strong support of his party, who had virtually no base in his home state, who relied on television to package himself as a candidate and who ran his administration not with party regulars or Republican politicos but with a campaign staff which was personally loyal to him. Hodgson tends to credit Kennedy with these changes, but they were far more characteristic of Nixon's administration. It was Nixon who first enunciated the "silent majority" theme, thereby attempting to put together a new majority coalition of middle-class Americans disaffected by the various signs of social decomposition around them. Finally, there were Nixon's departures from Rooseveltian policies: slowing the increase in government spending; perceiving that inflation, not poverty, was the chief domestic enemy; recognizing that America had overextended itself overseas, which led to the policies of détente with the Soviets, the SALT treaty and overtures to communist China. In many ways, rightly or wrongly, the Nixon administration set the political agenda for at least the next twenty years. In this context, the Carter Presidency was an interregnum, and much of the indecisiveness of the Carter administration came from the conflicting pressures it experienced—the new-left Democratic Presidency contending with new-right political realities, heirs of Roosevelt coming to Washington as an antiestablishment cadre.

The same observations made about the Rooseveltian coalition and liberal ideology can be made of the Nixonian coalition and conservative ideology: that the elements of the new coalition—Jewish neoconservative intellectuals and Catholic antiabortion housewives, Libertarians and Moral Majoritarians, businessmen and disaffected labor—are at cross purposes, as are some of their underlying ideologies. How long can such a coalition hold together? That is the question for Ronald Reagan. The effectiveness of his response will give us a new reading on Hodgson's thesis that the Presidency cannot survive in its present form. The success of the new Nixonian coalition is not guaranteed, even though it survived Watergate; we are not dealing, after all, with inevitable historical forces but with a loosely bound political amalgam of factions whose respective interests have only recently converged. The outcome of the debate on the Reagan administration's new economic plan will be an early indication of whether the combined opposition of groups whose programs are being cut will overcome the consensus that the federal budget has grown too large. It is one thing to be in favor of "getting the government off the people's backs"; it is quite another to see money being cut out of a program in which one has a direct interest.

A third shortcoming in the Hodgson analysis of the governability of the American people is philosophical. Like most political observers today, Hodgson is struck by the activity of single-issue groups and political-action committees. He is aware of the centrifugal tendency of the American polity. This he associates with the unrealistic expectations that our citizens have of the Presidency. Yet I think the cause of the centrifugality and ungovernability of the American electorate lies deeper, crossing party lines and political ideology; it has become evident throughout the entire culture.

There are two opposing schemes of practical ethics at work in America (and the Western world) which clash over the meaning of one word—"right." One ethic presumes that all men have individual *rights,* and it makes this concept the primary term of political debate, asserting that the main job of government is to protect, nurture and develop these rights. The assumptions here about human nature are Rousseauian, that men are essentially good, that their primary benefit lies in fulfilling themselves as they desire. Thus they must be accorded the largest possible degree of freedom, and the individual is considered to be the chief constituent of society. This ethic is reflected in demands for expanded welfare benefits, in the assertions of First Amendment absolutists, in the outcry against the peacetime draft and in the rabid protection of homosexual rights.

The opposing ethic presumes that there is a universally valid *right,* that is, an objective moral rule of right and wrong, asserting that we each have an obligation to obey this law because it is at the fountain of all social relations. This ethic is sometimes inspired by religious belief, and it assumes that human nature is a mixture of good and evil, and, therefore, part of the function of a society is to help men live the right way. In this view, the family is seen as the chief unit of society with primary nurturing responsibility for the individual. This ethic is seen by its critics as intrusive and by its proponents as the natural order of things. It is reflected in the antiabortion movement, in the claims of Moral Majoritarians and in the demands for harsher criminal penalties. These competing ethics in our society have deeply affected politics.

Events, I suspect, have propelled these two ethical concepts to the point where they face each other in nearly absolute opposition. This is why political compromise—and therefore political solutions—are nearly impossible in such matters as crime, abortion and gun control. If this ethical conflict is the real problem, then Hodgson's suspicion is right: the difficulties afflicting Presidential leadership lie beyond the reach of institutional reform. But other than a

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few passing references to "the twilight of authority" and "the crisis of legitimacy," he does not press the point. The roots of the pervasive crisis are buried in the political phenomena so well described in Hodgson's book. It's too bad he didn't spend more time trying to dig them out. □

Salvation by, of & for the Self

Mary Gordon: *The Company of Women;* Random House; New York.

Iris Murdoch: *Nuns and Soldiers;* Viking Press; New York.

by Stephen L. Tanner

The Company of Women is Mary Gordon's second novel. Her first, *Final Payments,* was a popular success and received high praise from reviewers. With this second novel, she adds to her reputation as an important young novelist of Roman Catholic manners and mores.

The novel explores the situation of a girl, Felicitas, growing up among adults —five husbandless middle-aged Catholic women clustered about a priest— who see her as their hope for the future. "She will be the comfort of our old age," says Father Cyprian, the spiritual advisor for Felicitas's widowed mother and her four friends: "She will embody what we stand for in the world when we are dead." What Cyprian stands for is a fierce Catholic orthodoxy and reactionary social and political views.

Being the center of this group's love and attention prevents Felicitas from having friends her own age and learning what those associations teach. She is robbed of her childhood. By the time she reaches college, she is ripe for rebellion and so eager to be accepted by the world outside her peculiar family that she takes up with Robert, a radical political-science teacher at Columbia, and joins him in an urban commune. The time is 1969. Robert, who hates respectability and a narrow moral sense, seeks "a revolution of consciousness." He despises his privileged childhood and wishes he had been born a woman —a black woman. Failing that, he would prefer to have been "born Third World."

As a reverse parallel to Cyprian, Robert is the center of admiration of the women in the commune, including Felicitas who falls slavishly in love with him. He tells her he is going to liberate her emotions and destroy her repressions. She, of course, is simply fleeing from one dominant male authority to another, from one end of the religious-political spectrum to the other. She ends up deserted and pregnant.

After flirting with the possibility of an abortion, she returns to her mother and her Catholic friends and becomes reconciled to their love. She has demonstrated her independence and can now accept them on her own terms. She marries a slow-witted but safe husband and attends to the business of rearing her daughter, self-consciously trying to assure that the child has normal childhood experiences. She has no spiritual life but is reconciled with Cyprian and reveres him "for his labor, for his passionate, excluding love, for the dignity of his priestly calling he wears with him everywhere: the habit of his grand, impossible life." Cyprian, for his part, mellows a little before death and even prays for the ordination of women (the refusal to ordain women is what upsets Ms. Gordon most about the Catholic Church).

The heroines of both of Ms. Gordon's novels have been damaged in some way by male authority. This is a reflection of her feminism, which is as important an element in her writing as Catholicism. She has said that one of the things that most interested her in writing *The Company of Women* "is female powerlessness in relation to male power, the phenomenon of women who are very powerful with each other and very powerful in their own lives and powerful in their outside accomplishments, but who will suddenly buckle to the authority of a male mentor, whether it's a priest or professor or a lover." Near the end of the novel, Felicitas, who has been victimized by priest, professor and lover, says, "I wonder what abuse a woman has to go through at the hands of a man before she gives up the inward flicker of delight, like the click and flame of a cheap cigarette lighter, at being chosen? Where did we learn that definition of honor? As long as it is there, we are never really independent."

"[Mary Gordon] writes like a dream."
—*Ms.*

For Iris Murdoch, that "flicker of delight" on the part of women, and men too for that matter, makes the world go around—"that unmistakable seismic shock, that total concentration of everything into one necessary being, mysterious, uncanny, unique, one of the strangest phenomena in the world." She even makes this intense inexplicable mutual attraction of carnal beings a basis for moral regeneration.

Nuns and Soldiers is Iris Murdoch's twentieth novel. She is one of the best and most successful contemporary British authors. She puzzles critics, however, by being so prolific (20 novels in 25 years) and by treating some of the standard themes and situations of popular fiction. Is she a serious novelist treating the subjects of Gothic and pop-

Dr. Tanner is professor of English at Brigham Young University.

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ular romance? Or is she a skillful popular writer producing high-grade Harlequin romances? Maybe such questions don't need to be answered. The House of Fiction is large and has room for blended forms. In any case, Murdoch is a fascinating storyteller, inventive to a remarkable degree and uncommonly intelligent.

The nuns and soldiers of the title are metaphorical, with one exception, Anne, a woman who has recently ceased to be a nun after 15 years of cloistered life. She returns to London to renew a close friendship with Gertrude, whose husband Guy is dying of cancer. Surrounding this trio is a group of friends and relatives for whom Guy's home is a kind of headquarters. After Guy's death a tangle of love relationships ensues. Veronica loves Manfred who loves Anne who loves Peter who loves Gertrude who loves Tim who loves Daisy. The center of focus is the wealthy widow Gertrude and her sudden passion ("It was a *coup de foudre*") for Tim, a mediocre painter short on money and moral strength. The conflict grows out of the unlikeliness of their union. How can Gertrude want to marry a man so apparently unworthy of her and so different from her beloved first husband? Can Tim overcome his disreputable past, break definitively with Daisy, his partner in dissipation, and learn moral responsibility and artistic integrity? While Gertrude and Tim's relationship fluctuates between joy and misery, Peter, devoted to Gertrude, waits with patient restraint and nobility. And Anne, deeply in love with Peter, refrains with similar honor and discipline from declaring her love.

That is a bare outline of the relationship; it provides no hint of the delightfully complex and subtle psychological states Murdoch creates. Nor is there space here to discuss the portents and symbols, the ritualistic ordeals, the baptisms and rebirths, the figurative gods and demons, and the magical natural settings contained in the novel. There are enough to make a Ph.D. candidate salivate.

Both novels are worth lengthy individual consideration, but what interests me most are elements they have in common. These similarities reveal something about the state of contemporary fiction.

The first similarity is that both novels treat religion—specifically Roman Catholicism—with a mixture of attraction and repulsion. Neither author is engaged in Christian apologetics; in fact, neither takes Catholic orthodoxy seriously. Gordon's Father Cyprian is an unattractive character in many ways. Murdoch's ex-nun is visited by Christ in her kitchen—a rather peculiar Christ—but the vision is obviously intended to tell us about Anne's psychological state rather than to stimulate our faith. Yet in both novels religion is an important source of values; it supplies each author with ideals and absolutes, which are necessary for generating significant human conflict and growth. As Gordon admitted in an interview, people like Cyprian "stand for a kind of absolute standard and passion and uncompromisingness and some notion of the ideal. Without which I think life is very impoverished."

And fiction is impoverished also. We are engaged by characters and situations in which "oughtness" makes a difference. Human conflict, whether between people or within the individual, has significance only within a framework of values. And the values must be more than arbitrary or whimsical; they must bear the validation of the ages and correspond with man's innate moral sense. That moral sense is persistent enough that even writers such as Crane, Norris and Dreiser who set out to embody naturalistic theories in fiction were betrayed by it. They may have begun with the assumption that man is simply one of the animals, shaped exclusively by heredity and environment, living in a world devoid of absolute values; but as soon as they began creating character and event, then love, compassion, unselfishness, fairness and other perennial values—those at the heart of Christianity—asserted themselves. And in the end we are attracted to these writers not because of their naturalistic theories but in spite of them.

> "Writing [in *Nuns and Soldiers*] this bad cannot be faked; more likely it gushes straight from the unrelieved sincerity of an author who needs mostly to deceive herself . . . . I much prefer to take my erotic fantasies raw. They are more nutritious that way."
>
> —George Stade
> *New York Times Book Review*

Fiction in the 20th century has often ignored or discredited religion. In his characterization of literary modernism, Irving Howe says:

> A modernist culture soon learns to respect, even to cherish, signs of its division. It sees doubt as a form of health. It hunts for ethical norms through underground journeys, experiments with sensation, and a mocking suspension of accredited values. Upon the passport of the Wisdom of the Ages, it stamps in bold red letters: *Not Transferable.* It cultivates, in Thomas Mann's phrase, "a sympathy for the abyss." It strips man of his systems of belief and his ideal claims, and then proposes the one uniquely modern style of salvation: a salvation by, of, and for the self.

It is interesting, therefore, to consider how religion is treated in these two recent novels.

Murdoch's novel is filled with gods and devils, but they are metaphors. All the same they serve a purpose. They appeal to our interest in transcendent forces. Although Gertrude hates religion and Tim displays no interest

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in or commitment to it, their relationship is portrayed as redemption through symbolic baptisms, ritual ordeals, repentance and being true to an inextinguishable higher self. It is as though Murdoch recognizes the power and appeal of religious impulses and patterns and uses them without concern for whether God really exists. Whether there is a God or not, the enduring framework of religion—its patterns, values, conflicts—provides the stuff for writing engaging novels. Similarly, Gordon, although unable to accept much of Catholic doctrine (e.g. the Church's positions on birth control, abortion and ordaining women to the priesthood), still recognizes it as a source of standards, ideals and absolutes. Even if she does not accept them all, she knows their artistic value.

Perhaps these two cases indicate a trend within contemporary fiction. Literature may have moved far enough away from religion that its absence is being felt and its treatment in fiction has even a slight air of novelty. There are always writers with strong Christian concerns, even during periods when such concerns are not fashionable. Flannery O'Connor comes immediately to mind in the Catholic tradition. But her characters are usually not Catholic, and the patterns of redemption are often couched in grotesque secular terms. Gordon and Murdoch deal explicitly with Catholicism. Here's the difference: O'Connor used fiction to express her deeply felt religion; Gordon and Murdoch use the appeals of religion to create fiction.

For the reader committed to Judeo-Christian values, there is something hopeful about these novels that treat Christian mores, manners and shapes of experience. But there is something alarming also. While it is reassuring that Christianity is still a subject to interest intelligent authors, and that the patterns of sin, redemption, self-discipline and love still fascinate readers, it is disturbing to realize that the Christian elements are to some extent there as artistic exploitation—the form without the substance. The salvation is still by, of and for the self. □

Wait a Moment, George . . .

George Gilder: *Wealth and Poverty;* Basic Books; New York.

by James J. Thompson, Jr.

Before I had read even the first word of George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* I knew it possessed at least one great merit: it drives leftists into a frenzied dance of rage. An acquaintance of mine, a woman of spotless radical credentials (no enemies to the left on every issue from abortion to solar energy), informed me that she knew all about Gilder's book, and she had no intention of reading it after what George Gilder had done to women and blacks in his earlier writings. This display of dispassionate leftist analysis piqued my interest: surely George Gilder must be a racist ogre who, when not denigrating blacks, perpetrates nasty acts upon free womanhood.

Were my acquaintance to read *Wealth and Poverty* she would be even more horrified than she suspects. George Gilder has committed an unmentionable act. No, he embarks on no racist tirades, nor does he venomously assail the armed legions of feminism. Mr. Gilder stands accused of an even bolder atrocity: *Wealth and Poverty* is the most spirited and dashing defense of capitalism to appear on the American publishing scene in many a day. Leftists will have their hands full with this gentleman, for with wit, grace and erudition Gilder provides capitalism with a metaphysical and moral foundation and infuses that much-maligned economic system with a high sense of drama that will amaze even the most ardent devotees of the free market. Over one hundred years after Karl Marx tolled the bells of capitalism's demise, George Gilder insists that the old girl still thrives—or at least will, if friend and foe alike will stop trying to hurry her into the grave.

Gilder advances a startlingly simple thesis: "capitalism begins with giving." The adventurous entrepreneur casts his assets into the economic arena with no assurance of return, knowing full well that he may lose all in the venture of the moment. If he succeeds, fine, for he reaps financial rewards, society benefits through the creation of new jobs and the government rakes in more tax revenues which can then be funneled back into socially beneficial programs. Unfortunately, though, from Gilder's perspective, high tax rates and misguided federal welfare policies have stifled initiative, dampened the entrepreneurial spirit and promoted feckless hedonism among the rich and enervating dependence among the poor. Proponents of economic stasis exacerbate these problems with their apocalyptic warnings of a looming disaster that can be averted only through economic stagnation. If the no-growth advocates win the field their prophecies will become self-fulfilling, Gilder argues: America will slide rapidly into ruin.

Gilder sketches skillfully the broad lineaments of our national malaise; we have undeniably worked our way into a mess of gigantic proportions. To extricate America from its travail will try the mettle of even the most intrepid of men, but Gilder offers a way out: tax reduction for the wealthy to encourage entrepreneurial enterprise, a supply-side economics that emphasizes production rather than demand, a renovation of public-welfare policies to promote diligence, thrift and self-respect, and a reaffirmation of the value of work, family and faith in the future. These solu-

Dr. Thompson is professor of history at the College of William and Mary.

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tions, commonsensical as they may be, have called down showers of abuse upon Gilder. But Gilder provokes even greater controversy when he unveils the centerpiece of his vision for national renewal. Quite simply, Gilder believes that risk, chance and choice form the bedrock of the existence of free men. Freedom brings anxiety, for the free man must face unflinchingly the bewildering and ofttimes frightening exigencies of life. Opportunity beckons, but the quest to take advantage of that opportunity leaves one prey to the unknown, to the multiple possibilities of failure and success. George Gilder would do no less than restore to Americans their rapidly waning sense of the high adventure of life, of the infinite possibilities of freedom and of faith in man's ability to conquer the obstacles that confront him in an open society.

The minions of Marxism, armed with their deterministic schemes, offer a carefully charted path to utopian bliss. Socialists and liberal proponents of economic stasis promise the same redemption from the exigencies of human existence: perfect security through planning. No risk, no chance—and no freedom—in this future world. One need only turn to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward,* the novel of 1888 that fired leftist imaginations at the turn of the century, to glimpse the socialist vision of a society devoid of risk and blessed with complete security. Happiness reigns in Bellamy's utopia, for a powerful state ensures equality and the satisfaction of material needs. From cradle to grave the state shelters the citizens from strife, worry and anxiety. Of course, everyone must serve his twenty years in the industrial army, and dissenters are clapped into mental hospitals, but who could cavil at such a small price for harmony and security?

For Edward Bellamy, caught in the throes of a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing society, the prospects of a utopia devoid of the messy realities of freedom proved too alluring to resist. But when I plod through the tedious, bland pages of Bellamy's paean to a risk-free life I am struck by one thought: the masses of people in such a world would probably sink into a stuporous ease, while those few individuals still able to remember the exhilarating anxiety of freedom would long for even one disruptive act as a reminder that the spirit of adventure had not completely withered.

Gilder recognizes the need for choice, chance and risk; like the philosopher William James, he celebrates an open universe filled with a mutability and change that continually produce new problems for man to grapple with and new obstacles to hurdle. And in this grappling and hurdling man extracts the full measure of enjoyment from life and hones his sensibility to a keen edge.

This urge has abounded in the history of the West. Columbus felt it when he struck out across the Atlantic in his frail ships. Galileo exhibited it when, counter to the received wisdom of his day, he ventured to revise man's view of the universe. The heroes of the Church have frequently been men willing to risk their very lives to spread the Gospel; it does not demean the saintliness of the Jesuit missionaries of the 16th and 17th centuries to suggest that a high sense of adventure impelled them to brave the wilds of the Americas and the unknown lands of the East. And who can forget the warriors, those men who willingly faced insuperable obstacles for some compelling vision? William Faulkner sensed this with all the power of his magnificent artistry when he described in *Intruder in the Dust* the thought that must have seized more than one gray-clad veteran as General George Pickett's men stood ready on the morning of July 3, 1863: *"Maybe this time* with all this much to lose and all this much to gain: Pennsylvania, Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself to crown with desperate and unbelievable victory. . . ." It takes little insight to realize that the makers of socialist utopias have failed to reckon with what makes a man's heart throb and his nerve endings tingle.

". . . entrancing whacko stuff . . ."
—*Village Voice*

"This kind of reasoning does more to make altruism look bad than to make capitalism look good."
—*The New Republic*

For George Gilder, man's essential urge to assert his freedom through risk appears in the entrepreneurial capitalist. But lest this trait degenerate into a blind and mindless love of adventure for its own sake (something the warrior has always been prey to), Gilder's entrepreneur, in the very act of risking, commits himself to the good of society by using his money and energy to benefit others. A measure of altruism, then, informs the entrepreneur's taste for exploiting the contingencies of life. In analyzing capitalism's strengths and weaknesses, Gilder writes, both friend and foe have failed to discern the "high adventure and redemptive morality" of the system.

What does one make of all this finally? At the very least, Gilder has pulled off an intellectual *tour de force,* for he has stood Adam Smith's self-interested individual on his head, turned him into an altruist and imbued him with an existential enthusiasm for the maelstrom of experience. No greedy, self-seeking capitalist here, but rather a hero of the 20th century. I grant George Gilder the sparkling insight and intellectual acumen—not to mention courage—that runs throughout *Wealth and Poverty.* This man has the

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bold vision and coruscating brilliance capable of dazzling and inspiring a whole generation of young Americans. But at the risk of dampening the jubilation that swirls about this book as it makes its rounds in conservative circles, I must raise an objection or two, if for no other reason than to help Mr. Gilder keep his feet firmly planted in reality as he reads the laudatory clippings that pour in from conservative magazines.

This matter of altruism presents problems. Man's motivations and impulses form a tangled skein all but impossible to unravel. This makes it extremely difficult to discern the genuinely altruistic act. I do not wish to sound like a hardened cynic, but it seems to me that altruism is a scarce commodity. Other than Mother Teresa of Calcutta or a woman's devotion to her child, I am hard pressed for examples. But Gilder needs to see the entrepreneur's actions as altruistic, for this forms an essential part of the moral foundation of capitalism. Gilder admits that the entrepreneur strives for rewards in the form of financial gain. That does not trouble me, for, as Gilder shows, the entrepreneur's actions benefit society. But that is not altruism. The entrepreneur expects a return, even though he knows it may not come. But then the socialist ideologue expects a return also, in the form of power over the lives of others. Man's fallen nature precludes the existence of much genuine altruism, so why not accept the fact that where politics and economics rise to the fore one finds self-interested men at work? Freedom —not altruism—is the great metaphysical blessing of capitalism.

Gilder quotes approvingly Joseph Schumpeter's contention that "creative destruction is the essential fact about capitalism," and Gilder adds: "creative destruction is always the essence of growth." Capitalism, then, looks to the future, seeks to shake off the dead hand of the past; socialism, by contrast, embodies the reactionary mentality at its worst. Now, just what does this "creative destruction" destroy? Presumably the very things that traditionalist conservatives from Edmund Burke to the present have cherished, most notably an organic, stable social order that changes through gradual accretion. For traditionalists, "creative destruction" calls to mind the terrible simplifiers of the past—the Cromwells, the Robespierres, the Lenins—who thought that the just and good society would emerge only from the ruins of the old order.

American traditionalists—especially since the late 19th century—have faced a debilitating paradox: to preserve tradition in a land given over to change, innovation and progress. George Gilder's "creative destruction" has not made their lot any easier. Large parts of the rural South preserved their traditional mores until well into the 20th century. The rhythms of rural life remained more akin to the ways of a distant past than to the dictates of a modern urban, industrial order. And though the Southern countryman could not divorce himself completely from the currents of modernity, he knew in his heart of hearts that, as Andrew Lytle wrote in 1930, "A farm is not a place to grow wealthy; it is a place to grow corn." Technology, industrialization and the forces unleashed by capitalism have

largely destroyed this world. I accept that fact—after all, I have no choice—but I adamantly refuse to celebrate the death of that world, as George Gilder probably would.

We cannot choose this older society above one based upon capitalism; rather, the choice lies between the social and economic system that exists at present in America and the socialist vision of a planned, egalitarian order. I go with George Gilder on this. Yet I can never be Gilder's man of the future; I am rooted in the past, and I live uneasily in Gilder's world. I admire his love of freedom, his appreciation of the need for risk and adventure, his desire to expand the considerable blessings of prosperity to all Americans; but I shall stand just behind him, tugging at his sleeve and whispering: "Tradition, George, tradition; the past does matter; we need more than to hurl ourselves into a future of risk, innovation and change."

I fear something else, though, far more than the consequences of Gilder's disdain for the past. In the hands of less intellectually sophisticated people Gilder's spirited defense of entrepreneurship and supply-side economics may inspire a utopianism potentially as dangerous as that promoted by men of the left. Some conservatives seem intent on seizing upon supply-side economics as a panacea that will solve all of our problems and lead us into a land of milk and honey. The analytical tools of the economic theorist—be he Marxian, Keynesian or supply-sider—cannot touch the deepest sources of America's travail. Renewed prosperity alone will not bring America to glory, nor will it release us from the age-old and ineluctable frailties of mankind. Life remains tragic, and economic growth will not mitigate that tragedy. To his credit, George Gilder understands this, but do those who mouth the catchwords of a resurgent conservatism comprehend this elemental fact?

Whatever the shortcomings of Gilder's message, *Wealth and Poverty* has appeared at an auspicious moment in

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American history. Amidst the babbling of the doomsayers and in the face of a massive failure of nerve among liberals, George Gilder has emerged as a bold visionary, unafraid of the future and convinced that the American experiment launched two hundred years ago has not yet played itself out. We need more George Gilders, men who grapple willingly with the intractable problems of our age. Conservatives may yet lose the battle for the mind and heart of America, but should this be our fate, no one will be able to accuse George Gilder of having failed the cause. Truly, he possesses in great measure that faith and courage he so admires in his entrepreneurs. May he never falter. □

The Melancholy of Idealism

Monica Furlong: *Merton: A Biography;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Edward J. Walsh

It was perhaps inevitable that a biography of Thomas Merton would emerge in 1980, as two profoundly diverse currents of Roman Catholic intellectual life clashed. The first, enunciated by Pope John Paul II and the Vatican hierarchy, stands unequivocally for the defense of Christian spirituality as the essence of the priestly mission. Against the Vatican, and even against the Pope, are arrayed priests and women religious who act as political agents, almost without exception for leftist and Marxist forces.

Thomas Merton, the gifted monk of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance, was and is viewed as a charismatic, heroic figure by both traditional and radical Catholics. In his autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain,* he described the near-tangible closeness to the Holy Spirit he felt in his early years in the monastery. Later, he was a pioneer of the priestly left. Merton's numerous letters, many reprinted in Monica Furlong's sympathetic book, provide a revealing glimpse at the evolution of the modern pastoral rebel with which the Church is currently well populated.

The story of Merton's life is, of course, much more than the oft-told tale of how an obedient priest notices social injustice and becomes a protest-marching apologist for leftist political notions. He was a brilliant man whose sensibilities were more than a match for the secular world, although he partook freely of its attractions before converting to Catholicism in 1938 at the age of 23. It is not widely known among admirers of Merton's contemplative writings that he fathered an illegitimate child during his university years in England. He was sophisticated and cosmopolitan, knowledgeable of art, literature, good food and wine, a skillful writer and satirist. He was also an orphan. Furlong speculates that the early deaths of his parents had much to do with Merton's embrace of the monastic life, with its close-knit personal relations, and, later, with his search for meaning in meditation and social action.

Furlong's psychoanalysis of Merton is less important, and less interesting, than her scrupulous tracing of the events of his life and her editing of his letters. These are the virtues of her book, which provides a full portrait of the man and, most important, of the battle for meaning in his life that led him to Gethsemani and then away from it. For Thomas Merton is today larger than the sum of his own words and actions. His spiritual writings are studied by contemplatives the world over, and his colleagues in radical causes are now demigods of the international left. He left a legacy of spiritual conflict that racks Christianity today; commonly referred to as the debate over the role of religion in politics, it touches more intimately the eternal questions of how the Christian responds to evil in the world. That is the question that shook Merton in his contemplative surroundings and drove him in agony and confusion toward civil disobedience and Marxism.

It is enlightening, therefore, to look deeply at Merton's life, as Furlong's *Biography* allows us to do. She effectively masks her view of the vocation he selected, at least until later in the book. Like many of Merton's worldly friends, she empathized with his total commitment to the Catholic faith, although they wondered, as the years passed, why such a fine writer would choose to forsake the world so completely by entering the strictest religious order he could find. When, later on, he encountered frustration and loneliness in the monastery, some of them seem to have known that it was inevitable.

But it is a mistake to conclude that Merton's political views later in life sprang from some deep psychic configuration, and it would be a mistake, too, to make too much of them. After all, he never left the priesthood, or repudiated the Pope, as is often the case today. Merton was always indifferent to the ideological coloring of political events. He was upset at the outbreak of World War II, but afterward thought little of it. He was preoccupied at the moment with his crystallizing vocation, and throughout his life he remained concerned chiefly with his own spiritual development. And this is why he so easily sympathized with the Christian pacifists, the social activists and, eventually, the Marxist revolutionaries.

In terms of understanding the political nature of events, Merton was, like his close friends, the Berrigans, a rank amateur. He saw nuclear war and pronounced it immoral; he noticed, no earlier than anyone else, that blacks were discriminated against and called discrimination unjust. He heard that Marxists were calling for an end to poverty and

Mr. Walsh is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

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misery in Latin America and decided they were doing God's work. He saw evil, in short, and pronounced it wrong. But never, once he began dispensing moral judgments on political questions, did he consider that nuclear war would never be possible if the Soviet Union did not threaten it, or that Marxists might prove to be crueler than any set of Latin oligarchs when it came to establishing and enforcing political dominance. Merton was a true believer, and it never occurred to him that his beliefs might be somewhat askew in a world in which the spiritual life was under virulent attack by unbelievers. Like many other Christian activists, he had spent years training himself in moral reflection; if moral reflection is the primary calling of the clergyman, that is of course the only kind of training that makes sense. But few Christian clergy today, especially among the Catholic priesthood and the mainline Protestant ministry, are uneducated in the realm of world affairs, hence they ought to be able to recognize the hard political meaning of, for example, Marxist speeches. Strangely enough, it is the less-learned preachers of America's fundamentalist sects who seem to be more aware of the distinction between political and moral judgments.

What is occurring in the established Christian churches today is that multitudes of clergy, hoping to keep in step with multitudes of laymen who are by no means regular churchgoers, are abandoning any semblance of rationality in judging political events. Recently, more than one hundred American churchmen and -women endorsed an *ad hoc* organization called the U.S. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, which urged an end to U.S. military assistance to El Salvador, but made no mention of the flow of weapons from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to the Marxist guerrillas in that country. Among the endorsers of the Committee, these names scattered among those of the good clergy, were Jane Fonda, Bella Abzug, Marcus Raskin, Isabel Letelier and many more whose political slant can only be described as fawningly pro-Soviet. Yet the Christians who signed on with the Committee are far more knowledgeable and experienced in world affairs than Thomas Merton ever was.

The tragedy, and the irony, of current clerical social activism is that it has moved so far beyond the moralistic questioning of Thomas Merton, who, during the 60's, was one of the first Catholic priests to adopt uncritically leftist positions. Today the Reverend Ernesto Cardenal, one of Merton's closest friends in his last years, is minister of culture in the Sandinista regime that rules Nicaragua, an obsequious Soviet-Cuban satellite, "a puppet of a puppet," in the words of one democratic-minded Nicaraguan. A Maryknoll priest, the Reverend Miguel d'Escuto, is Nicaragua's foreign minister. In Central America—which Merton hoped to visit but was not allowed to by his superior—the Jesuit and Maryknoll orders have been largely radicalized. "Liberation theology," a grotesque attempt to caricature Christ as an urban guerrilla, is the reigning liturgical style, as it is among leftist clergy the world over.

Looking back at Thomas Merton's whole life, one guesses he would have been sympathetic but confused at this aspect of his legacy. While he provided the literary armament for radical activists and worse in the protest years, he remained a thoroughgoing idealist. That his ideals would be seized upon and corrupted by grim revolutionaries within and without the Church was a possibility that simply would not have registered with Merton. To disbelieve or distrust those whom he heard repeating his own sentiments was not in his bones.

The beauty of Monica Furlong's approach to Merton's life is the sincere reverence she shows for the man as an idealist. She documents thoroughly the evolution of his disillusionment with the world, his acceptance of the Church, his hurried application to the monastery and his eventual detachment from it. We learn from her that he was ill-at-ease with the world: during his youth because of what he considered his own failings, but later, as he found his own limited peace, because he perceived the yawning gap between his intense conviction of the innate goodness of the human spirit and the tragedy and violence of the world in which it exists.

Furlong makes clear, however, that Merton's political meanderings did not distract him from his investigation of the contemplative aspect of man—which is to say, the investigation of his own soul. He was, from the first, learned in the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, especially St. Benedict and his Rule, who mapped out the purpose of the monastic life. But he looked farther—into Zen, Hinduism and Buddhism—and eventually was permitted to make

In the Mail

The Language of American Popular Entertainment **by Don B. Wilmeth; Greenwood Press; Westport, Connecticut.** A very informative glossary and guide to the vernacular of entertainment slang and terminology, with origin and etymology provided where possible. Highly recommended for reference shelves.

International Security Review, **Vol. VI, No. I edited by Stephen P. Gibert; Center for International Security Studies of the American Security Council Foundation; Boston, Virginia.** A quarterly publication devoted to commentary on foreign policy and national security.

Christianity in a Neo-Pagan Society **edited by Paul L. Williams, Ph.D.; Northeast Books, Div. of Cultural Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania; Scranton, Pennsylvania.** The proceedings of the Third Convention of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars treating such issues as theological questions, moral and secular values.

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his journey to the East, where he died, his death surrounded by mystery and ambiguity, but also, to his admirers, by peace. Thomas Merton was a humble, loving man who was in some ways misunderstood, and who misunderstood some things himself. His bequest of misbegotten causes has been promulgated and mutated until it is unrecognizable as the wistful thinking of a meditative man in the forest. But political movements grow old and die. The real legacy of Thomas Merton, as Monica Furlong suggests, is triumphantly of the monastery at Gethsemani where he is buried. □

Let Us Return to First Principles

Joseph Epstein: *Ambition;* E. P. Dutton; New York.

by Paul Gottfried

Joseph Epstein, editor of *American Scholar,* is a cultural critic who writes with flair and offers learned judgments about the state of American society. Like the more explicitly conservative George Will, Epstein is fond of citing 18th- and 19th-century authorities on 20th-century problems. His essays, also like Will's, abound with references to Tocqueville, Emerson, Matthew Arnold, Dr. Johnson and Burke; they and others are cited to good effect on the dangers of cultural leveling, emotional excess and educational mediocrity. A relentless advocate of high linguistic and learning standards, Epstein seems to be, in one of his own favorite phrases, "on the side of the angels."

His latest book testifies to his continuing concern with a changing American character. The major theme is ambition —or, more accurately, the highly ambivalent attitude that modern Americans have toward worldly success. One part of his book consists of portraits of famous Americans who amassed great fortunes by steadily exerting themselves to get ahead. Henry Ford, Samuel du Pont, Meyer Guggenheim and that self-promotion genius, Ben Franklin, are treated as devotees of the traditional American work ethic. They, like many others, sought unabashedly to gain money and influence, convinced as they were that the pursuit of both was entirely meritorious. Epstein mentions in passing the Weber thesis on the correlation between the psychology of the capitalist entrepreneur and Calvinist moral theology. According to Max Weber, a capitalist economy in either Europe or America would never have been achieved in the absence of those moral attitudes toward work and profit which Calvinist theology imparted. Calvinism taught service to God through the pursuit of one's worldly vocation. Since Calvinists viewed salvation as a gift conferred independently of human merit, they looked for signs of divine grace in their social and material relationships. Calvin and his immediate disciples were highly critical of commercial dealings, but they helped to create an ethos of "worldly asceticism" that found its fullest expression in the incipient capitalist economy of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Significantly, Weber turned to secularized Calvinists like Benjamin Franklin to furnish examples of a triumphant Protestant ethic. With some justification, he argued that Calvinism's moral values continued to shape men's characters as a social ethic even after the religious doctrines had lost their spell. Thrift, sobriety and the systematic pursuit of profit, even if no longer taken as a sign of divine election, remained the hallmarks of the early American capitalist. And, as Epstein notes, they became universalized ethical imperatives which German Jews and Irish Catholics could embrace with the same zeal as Scottish Presbyterians.

Despite the long-time identification of American prosperity with the prevalence of the Protestant work ethic, men of letters in the mid-19th century were already denouncing material ambition as a national obsession. Epstein traces the genealogy of this powerful dissent from Henry Adams's intellectual elitism and social snobbery down to the new-left attacks on the "American system." To his credit, he makes appropriate distinctions between 19th-century traditionalist critiques of the Gilded Age and modern rejections of the work ethic. Although critical of his own society, Henry Adams, for example, considered his productive scholarly life a failure for being devoid of his ancestor's political accomplishments. By contrast, our contemporary attacks on ambition curse America's past as well as its present. Adams criticized the work ethic of his day for being too closely associated with material pleasure and ostentation, but, like Max Weber, he respected the moral restraint and ascetic values of his own ancestral Protestant culture.

But whatever the differences between Adams's and Irving Babbitt's ap-

"The silliest and most dangerous part of Epstein's book [is] the pretense that the commercial foundations of our society have been undermined by currents of radical chic . . ."

—The Nation

"Take a can of Corn Niblets, blend into a pot of slightly warm Cheez Whiz, and *voila,* you'll have the culinary equivalent of Joseph Epstein's *Ambition* . . ."

—Village Voice

Dr. Gottfried teaches history at Rockford College, and he is a contributing editor of Modern Age.

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peals to ascetic and scholarly ideals and the liberal culture's hedonism, Epstein notes a thematic continuity between them. They all attack the allegedly dehumanizing effect of men's ceaseless striving for worldly advancement and single out their own country for special blame. Because of a success fixation, Americans, it is claimed, have ignored higher cultural values and have lost sight of any nobler end beyond "making it." Epstein concedes the force of these arguments but also shows what moral problems have attended modern America's abandonment of ambition as an ideal. Our commercial and political leaders have grown embarrassed about money and power. They spend much of their time apologizing to others while supporting their own declared enemies. Families of established wealth underwrite the cost of revolutionary agitation and subsidize their countercultural detractors. Even those who remain explicitly ambitious are often morally less admirable than earlier generations of self-made men. What survived of the older religious (Victorian) work ethic in Carnegie and Rockefeller has by now been badly eroded. Those who strive after money do so only to enjoy it and not to fulfill a God-given calling, even one stripped of its older theological context.

Epstein describes a flawed ideal (ambition) being replaced by self-hate in a moral vacuum. No eulogies to capitalist productiveness or to material progress can dislodge the problem here posed. A moral difficulty bedevils us as a modern nation and goes back to what our founding fathers failed adequately to address: the social-ethical dimension of our national life. *The Federalist Papers,* produced by Madison and Hamilton in defense of a newly framed constitution, viewed religious institutions primarily as mutually restraining forces. The "extended republic" which they hoped to build depended upon having churches and social institutions function within a system of countervailing influences. Not virtue and justice, but freedom and prosperity within a federal framework, were the paramount values to which our national founders appealed. That they gave short shrift in their constitutional arguments to public virtue and the moral requirements of citizenship may be hard to hold against them. Most Americans were then churched and still living in what, by modern standards, were tightly knit communities. Appeals to doctrinal orthodoxy also went against the nature of the American political experiment. The confessional strife that had proved so ruinous in Europe was still vivid in the Founders' minds.

Yet the pluralism we inherited has, by now, been strained to the breaking point. The principle of religious diversity based on common biblical and classical values has given way to "alternate lifestyles," while ambition has been emptied, both in fact and in the popular imagination, of moral substance. Perhaps the time is then ripe—and certainly many Americans believe that it is—for a return to "first principles." If, as Aristotle taught, each activity, study, life and community is directed toward a specific inherent good, our ambitions as individuals and as a people can be rendered defensible only in the form of a shared vision of justice. Without this common perspective, we can surely expect a quantum leap in those unhappy family histories that Epstein so eloquently recounts. □

Chatting About Evil

Ingeborg Day: *Ghost Waltz;* Viking Press; New York.

by Christina Murphy

Early into *Ghost Waltz,* Ingeborg Day comments that between 1945 and 1975 alone nearly fifty thousand books were written about Adolf Hitler, and she wonders whether her own book will contribute much toward unraveling the complex tapestry of evil and conflicting values that was nazi Germany. In a way, she is right to wonder, for *Ghost Waltz* is a probing of one central issue: how the parents Day remembers as loving and kind could have endorsed Hitler's vision, how her father, especially, could have served as a member of the nazi secret police. *Ghost Waltz's* success thus depends upon two main premises—Day's ability to probe her father's psyche and her ability to relate her father's individual actions to the larger pattern of an understanding of human nature, or at least of human values.

Success eludes Day in her first endeavor. She readily admits that her father has remained to her an enigma all her life, a man whose life was closed up and bound by duty and honor, whose rigid and inflexible character made it impossible for his children to feel close to him, a man whom she describes as possessed by "an inability to see any matter from another person's point of view, not a refusal, an inability." Rigidity she perceives as the essence of his character:

> Either/or, yes/no, black/white . . . This slavery held my father captive all his life . . . For a lifetime my father lived as if driven by a machine with only an on/off switch governing emotion and brain, a switch, moreover, that worked only once for any human being or idea.

Perhaps this "on/off switch governing emotion and brain" is a form of blindness, for surely if one is oblivious or dispassionate to the shades of gray in human existence absolute actions become easier to perform and certainly easier to justify. Day perceives that her mother operated in the same manner, blinding herself to what she chose not

Dr. Murphy teaches English at Mississippi Industrial College.

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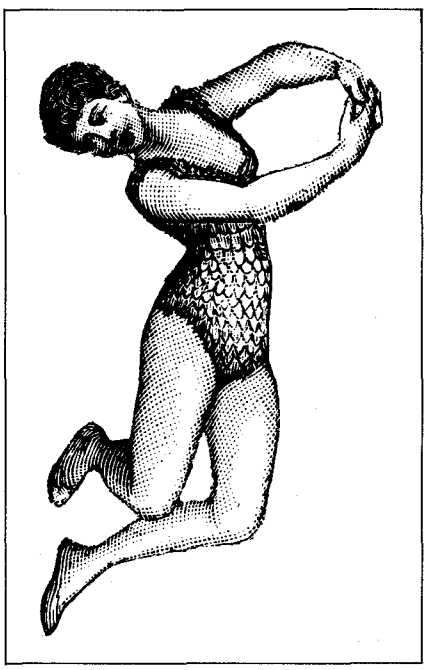
to see. A woman ostensibly placid and obedient, whose obeisance could be described as "the spineless calm that sometimes accompanies doing what is expected of one." A woman cognizant of her husband's involvement with the nazis yet choosing to maintain the treasured family illusion that father is a locksmith, though he works too many hours of the day and night for such a profession and comes home late in grease-stained clothing that no locksmith job could create. A woman who, bedridden for three years with a kidney disease, chooses to emphasize to her children her husband's kindness in caring for her through her illness rather than the nightly pilgrimages made by her husband to the maid's bedroom, journeys of which everyone in the household, including the mother, is poignantly aware. Perhaps, as Day suggests, such capacity for delusion, for self-imposed blindness, demonstrates how or why nazism bound the collective German psyche and resulted in the atrocities of World War II. People did not see themselves or their situations as they were. The nazi policeman presented himself to his family and his community as a locksmith; the devoted husband by day became the adulterer at night, who still saw himself the next day as the center of moral probity for his family. Dissociation, perhaps this was the villain in Day's eyes—that immeasurably strong capacity in human beings to remove themselves from responsibility for their actions.

This conclusion, that human beings lie to themselves and very often perform immoral actions under moral guises, seems the best insight into the mainspring of nazi Germany that Day can offer in *Ghost Waltz,* yet she seems to want more. There is some refusal on Day's part to let such a massive evil as nazism rest upon such simple explanations as human frailties. The horror that her parents were associated with, "history's worst," the nazis, seems to propel Day to find some extremely complex explanation for their behavior, when, in fact, the true explanation is the simplest. People do what they do to survive, and when survival becomes one's primary motivation, ethics serves no purpose. In the battle for survival, ethics becomes the ultimate obstacle and thus is readily abandoned.

That Day brings us to this conclusion is not surprising, nor is it particularly illuminating. In fact, Day's philosophizing seems but a watered-down version of Hannah Arendt's view in *The Human Condition* or *Eichmann in Jerusalem* of the banality of human evil. It's not that Day consciously mimics or restates Arendt's views—although if Day's research for *Ghost Waltz* is as extensive as she claims, she must undoubtedly have been aware of Arendt's writings—it is just that some human motivations, supposedly complex, reduce themselves to nothing more than a desire for self-preservation. Examination of "history's worst" and of the legions of everyday, simple people who responded to Hitler's command to execute six million people with as much resistance or moral debate as would accompany the paying of a phone bill is certainly a worthy goal for any author interested in history's outcomes to pursue. But "pursue" is the essential element here, or rather, more precisely, "penetrate to." Melville's Ahab in *Moby Dick* understands the fundamental perception that if one is to come to terms with evil, to meet it, face it, understand it for what it is, one must "strike through the mask." Day's failure to do more than to record with puzzlement how her parents could have acted as they did is a failure to be aggressive with her subject, possibly arising out of a failure to understand it. If there is so little to say about one's parents, why make them the focus of *Ghost Waltz,* and if Day herself and her inner being intrude upon the memoir, why is she not the subject as opposed to the supposedly detached observer and recorder? The answer may well reside in the fact that *Ghost Waltz* is more a catharsis for Day, the unjumbling and unraveling of a series of painful and puzzling memories in the hope that, given artistic form, they would also yield clarification and a certain unburdening of guilt and confusion.

> "*Ghost Waltz* is a passionate, careful, difficult, effective, and extremely troubling memoir . . ."
>
> —*Ms.*

While catharsis may be an interesting and noble aim for Day, it does not create for the reader a cogent or convincing experience. The final chapters or vignettes of *Ghost Waltz* prove that by switching from the recounting of a neighborhood child's Bar Mitzvah to Day's sentiment-laden description of Christmas in Austria with her daughter. What these two chapters have to do with each other or with the central topic



of *Ghost Waltz* one can legitimately wonder. In fact, one could legitimately wonder what one is reading about at all, since Day's parents, nazism, the nature

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of evil, etc., etc., have floated away, drifted away after the first third of the book to be replaced by stories of work at the office, Andy's Bar Mitzvah and mother-daughter reunions. All of this wandering away from topics or themes of any significance makes *Ghost Waltz* a flawed and limited work. Rather than a reflection on history, human values or human motivations, *Ghost Waltz* becomes instead only a chatty book, of interest, perhaps, to Day's friends, who may find descriptions of her life and musings of value. The reader who seeks from *Ghost Waltz* an understanding of the topics the book purports to investigate will be severely disappointed by its lack of focus and design and severely frustrated by its aimless rambling from topic to topic. Had Day desired to write a diary of her thoughts over the years on her family and her life, *Ghost Waltz* would be an effective, though uninteresting, means to accomplish that end. As a book which lays claim to some measure of authenticity and some measure of concern with significant issues, *Ghost Waltz* is a failure. Day is not a philosopher, neither is she an historian; why she would endeavor to write a work requiring skills she does not possess one can only wonder. □

Subverting History & Tradition

Garry Wills: *Explaining America: The Federalist;* Doubleday & Co.; New York.

Harry C. Boyte: *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizen Movement;* Temple University Press; Philadelphia.

Michael Walzer: *Radical Principles: Reflections of an Unreconstructed Democrat;* Basic Books; New York.

by Edward J. Lynch

American politics is commonly characterized as nontheoretical politics. Our national debates lack the contributions of a Plato, an Aristotle, a Hobbes or a Rousseau. Many of our scholars actually revel in the absence of this theoretical dimension, claiming that it enables us to avoid much of the turmoil associated with such fundamental thinking. The only book that appears to challenge this stand is *The Federalist,* and most Americans avoid the theoretical questions tackled there by ignoring the book. Garry Wills's interpretation of the eighty-five essays comprising that volume is one of the handful of books published in this country devoted to this defense of the Philadelphia Constitution. Although the Wills essay has some merit, one can still say that we are awaiting the first accurate interpretation of *The Federalist,* one that takes the book on its own terms, using it to argue against those elements of the philosophic tradition that it rejects, building on the blocks that it provides and seeing the profundity of the actual work. To date, no one seems to have read the book whole.

The absence of an accurate understanding of *The Federalist* to inform our political discussion is one indication of the extent to which the American people have become divorced from their heritage. Each of the volumes discussed in this review contributes to this separation in its own way. Nonetheless, each of these volumes reflects powerful trends in current political thinking, and the distance between them and *The Federalist* demonstrates the degree to which "We the People" have lost vital parts of our tradition of liberty.

One can properly appreciate the revolutionary character of Publius's work only by placing *The Federalist* back into the context in which its authors wrote. The modern world assumes the desirability of the democratic form of government. Until the completion of the American Revolution, however, democracy was a form of government that lived in a state of disrepute. Athens had indeed provided a model of democracy, as had many other Greek city-states. These ancient models had hardly provided a shining example to others who would institute democratic government, however. To read the popular impression of democracy reflected in *The Federalist* reminds one of a rather Hobbesian world. Democracies had provided little stability and no security to human rights. The history of democracy on the Hellenic peninsula was a story of petty strife and continuous struggle, with the regimes being as short in their lives as they were violent in their deaths. Following these experiments, few societies prided themselves on their democratic character for nearly two thousand years. The tradition of political philosophy that developed in the interim contended that democracy was a form of government suitable only for small cities isolated from neighbors and composed of homogeneous groupings of virtuous citizens. The larger nations of Europe were content to develop stable monarchies to maintain order among their peoples and themselves.

In striking contrast to this historical lesson, the American founders believed that they could reconcile the republican (i.e., democratic) form of government with the security of rights that had been central to the principles of the Revolution. Moreover, they rejected the historical lessons that argued for a small regime and a homogeneous people. In contrast to the bloody foundings that had characterized other great nations, the American founders sought to institute good government by "reflection and choice," a form of government that required the perpetual involvement of its people, that promoted the idea of government by "the deliberate sense of

Dr. Lynch did his doctoral dissertation on The Federalist.

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the community" rather than merely by power, including majorities that might base their rule on power rather than right.

Publius has been given sufficient credit for the "new science of politics" that he developed following the guidance of David Hume. In passages that have commonly been cited as examples of political physics, Publius showed the method of separating powers between the branches of the legislature (and Wills is especially good in emphasizing the primacy of the legislature in the government defended by Publius) and of dividing the society itself into a multitude of kinds of property. Once the society itself was sufficiently fragmented, one could balance, by appropriate combinations of duties and interests among officials, any insufficiency of decent motives among the people themselves. Legislators would not merely reflect the opinions of average citizens; they would serve as filters, intended to "refine and enlarge the public views." With appropriate people in office (those who adhered to the true principles of our Revolution), we could sustain the democratic form as well as safeguard the liberties that good government is intended to secure.

The size of the republic was crucial at two critical points in the theory. If the republic was sufficiently large, and the forms of interests within it sufficiently diverse, it was believed unlikely that any common impulse of passion or of interest would cultivate in the people an urge to violate the natural rights of citizens. Some region of the country might be infected with this base passion, but it need not captivate the people as a whole. Majorities could thus provide the checks on vicious impulses through the routine operations of democratic procedures. The people would have to safeguard their own liberties, but they would not be at the mercy of overbearing (and fleeting) majorities when they tried to do so.

The second crucial factor arguing for the large over the small republic involved considerations of international affairs. Much of *The Federalist's* direct discussion of international affairs is confined to the less-than-popular papers attributed to John Jay, but the other wielders of Publius's pen discussed these matters frequently in the course of treating other topics. The essence of the teaching of *The Federalist* in the international arena is that bigger is better. Large nations have more resources with which to enrich themselves, hence to engage in commerce. They are also more likely to build the kind of unity that will deter assaults from other nations. Because a commercial nation of substantial size is likely to have far-flung interests, it will have greater need to develop the capacity to protect those interests, hence it will develop the deterrent that will make it a less inviting target for any potential assailants. Plato had argued in *The Laws* that the good city will be ruled by bad cities, at least to the extent that the good city must prepare to defend itself against the vicious tendencies of its less virtuous neighbors. The large republic offered a means of protecting oneself against small and vicious neighbors.

Wills is excellent in treating the discussion of the character of the people assumed by Publius, and he offers a needed corrective to those who be-

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Books and the Youthful Mind

"The major writers of our century have had a deep sense of things falling apart: Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald. Having that perception during the modern period is itself part of the definition of a major writer. For the past one hundred years writers have been repelled by secular modernism and its celebration of the Empiric Economic Man, The Individual let loose. To hold firmly to a sense of the real, writers were forced to be, consciously or otherwise, antiprogressive, antiliberal, even reactionary. Lionel Trilling, who held impeccable liberal credentials, wrote . . . 'liberal ideology has produced a large literature of social and political protest, but not, for several decades, a single writer who commands our real literary admiration . . . no literary figure of the very first rank . . . who, in his work, makes use of or gives credence to liberal or radical ideas.' "

—from "Snobbery as Spiritual Riches" by Joseph Schwartz

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lieve that the American founders sought a physics that would make democracy desirable, even for a vicious people. Our founders were idealists; they were not dreamers. *The Federalist* No. 55, among other papers, noted that republican government, more than any other form, presupposed the domination of the decent instincts of the people.

Wills avoids the superficial mistakes that have flawed most discussions of *The Federalist.* He recognizes that the three authors who held Publius's pen were engaged in a cooperative effort and that they made a consistent argument. He is not captivated by the positivist rebellion against metaphysics and can therefore refute Robert Dahl's effort to reduce the argument to a series of syllogisms. Although he does not reach out to the whole book, he understands that serious interpretation of it requires reading more of it than merely the Tenth Number. He is aware that the book is more than Locke adapted to an American setting.

Nevertheless, the context in which Wills places *The Federalist* is his own rather than the authors'. Wills offers this volume as the second essay of a projected tetralogy interpreting our nation. His first volume, *Inventing America,* was an analysis of "Jefferson's Declaration of Independence," a document that must be differentiated from the one adopted by the Second Continental Congress as the core of our national heritage. Following this volume, Wills intends to offer his readers an essay interpreting the Constitution. His concluding volume, tentatively entitled *Judging America,* will deal with the Supreme Court. Glancing at this sequence, beginning with a democratic republic and ending with panels of appointees as judges of the republic, hints at a sequence differing from our traditional understanding of these relationships. Wills understands the American tradition differently than our greatest statesmen have understood it, and he aims to replace the self-understanding that they have cultivated with his own perception.

Although Wills implicitly concedes the democratic roots of the Constitution discussed in *The Federalist,* he never directly confronts the question of the democratic character of the Constitution defended in the book. Although the authors of *The Federalist* sought to maintain their ties to the American Revolution and its principles, Wills has little to say about the relationship of their book to those principles, whether from their perspective or from the perspective of the Declaration of Independence that he offered a few short years ago. Wills's *Federalist* does have a context, but it is not the one established by Publius. His essay is one more example of the manner in which the political philosophy that animated the founding of this nation has been unmanned by the heirs of that founding.

Wills is somewhat weak in discussing other topics that *The Federalist* treated in an important fashion. He ignores Publius's treatment of the concept of federalism in No. 39. One finds no discussion by Wills of the potential size, and the bias toward expansion, built into the federal system by its founders, although he does concede that the book is a defense of strong government. He ignores the character of the representatives discussed in No.'s 35 and 36, and slights foreign-policy considerations. He mentions Willmoore Kendall in passing, but his treatment of Kendall's reading of *The Federalist* is a caricature. Martin Diamond is the most serious analyst to publish professional articles discussing the book in the past generation; Wills ignores him almost completely. Wills never addresses the critiques of Diamond that have surfaced among conservative scholars. He bases his work on the scholarship of Douglass Adair, yet Adair's major contribution to scholarship on *The Federalist* (allegedly identifying who wrote which of the papers) is irrelevant to the points that Wills wants at the center of his novel interpretation of *The Federalist.* Diamond, among others, had recognized this be-

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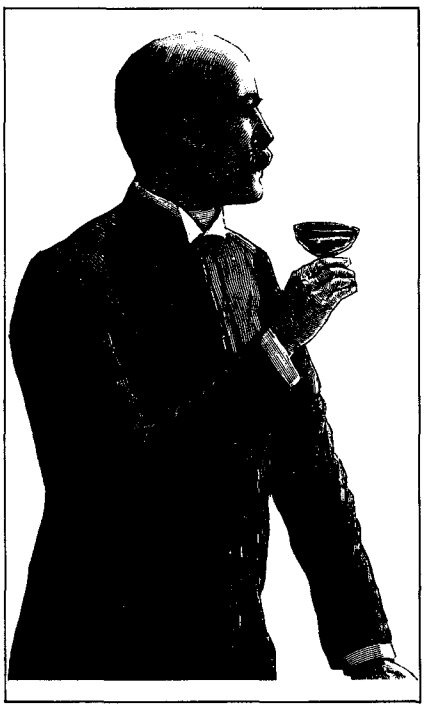
fore Wills.

Wills's theme unifying the assessment of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and this analysis of *The Federalist* is an argument that the political thought of the American founding is more properly traced to the "common sense" philosophy of the Scottish enlightenment than to the natural-right philosophy of John Locke. *The Federalist* clearly reflects the influence of something beyond John Locke, but that something is not limited to the Scottish enlightenment. Wills ignores the classical roots of American order and has little to say about the Christian influences on American politics. These omissions suggest that Wills does not want to tell a complete story.

Wills would have us believe that the natural-rights philosophy animating the American founding was merely a result of historical circumstances, something that might have been valid in the 18th century, but that human knowledge has transcended, much as science has progressed, in the interim. As Newton's physics has been found inadequate, such historicism would have us believe that the principles of the American founding must be superseded. At base, Wills's project is an effort to undermine the roots of American order.

Garry Wills provides evidence of the manner in which political roots are loosened through distortion and oversight, leading a people to forget the notions of right through which they could govern themselves and to embrace a "might makes right" theory of majority rule. Also called the Stephen Douglas Theory of Majority Rule, this axiom states that one need not care what the majority decides; whatever they want is the politician's duty. Politics, in such an atmosphere, is reduced to the clash of different sides attempting to win office in order to serve their selfish interests. Losing an election becomes a problem because "we won't get ours." In a federated society such as the United States, those who lose at one level have many other levels of government to achieve their ends. Harry Boyte's *The Backyard Revolution* shows some of the ways in which local groups are organizing and acting to shape policies in their jurisdictions when national



leaders are indifferent or hostile to their causes.

Where Wills attempts to discuss political theory, Harry Boyte has no need for theory. In his universe, theoretical questions are settled along a "left is good, right is bad" axis, and we can proceed in the identification of heroes and villains. Boyte is captivated by a Saul Alinsky-Ralph Nader faith that, if ordinary Americans organize, they will do so for purposes sympathetic to the political left. The movements of concern to Boyte are consumerist-oriented efforts, rent-control teams, local rebuilding concerns where funds are obtained by legal coercion to stop banks from redlining neighborhoods, fights against insurance and utility companies, and similar struggles that fit into this framework. Boyte asserts that any movement from the political right is animated by an envy of what others are gaining from the political process, a selfish desire to preserve property instead of helping people, and he alleges that such movements are financed by business-dominated conspiracies. Boyte heaps abuse on those who led the tax revolts; he ignores the right-to-life movement, overlooks efforts to elevate the standards of teaching in public schools, and gives short shrift to other movements currently identified with conservatism. The book relates organizational successes and preaches (to those who can plod through the jargon of academic sociology) that people can accomplish what they want by organizing properly.

The ability of Americans to combine in private voluntary associations was considered by Alexis de Tocqueville to be one of the traits that would make democracy decent among us. Such organizations allow people the sense of controlling some aspects of their lives and train them, on a small scale, for the responsibilities associated with higher positions on a national scale. Association and organization, of course, are tactics that can be used by both the virtuous and the vicious. Publius knew this and contended that the large republic would enable people to contain vicious organizations, localizing them into particular regions and preventing them from working their will with national political machinery. Boyte demonstrates that a good number of such organizations exist at the local level, that the idea of civic involvement in America is still strong and that some people have won their way in such political battles. Others will have to address the question of whether these groups promote the public interest or work "adverse to the rights of other citizens and to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."

Whether these organizations are a sign of the health or the decline of American society, it is clear that they are inevitably parochial in their concerns, thus unsuited to address large national questions. Boyte's book assumes that local politics is the important

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politics, and he evades questions of international conduct. This is to say that the concentration on the local necessarily leaves less time for the national. Boyte's omission of international politics merely indicates that the concerns of the large republic are beyond the span of those who address the concerns of the small republic. If Americans organize for decent purposes, they might sustain the civic virtue that would keep democracy a decent form of government for us. Boyte's groups invariably organize for self-interested reasons, indicating that their concerns are their monetary matters rather than large matters of the permanent and aggregate interests of the community. As such, Boyte's groups are not properly citizens' groups, for they lack the element of common public concern that makes activity truly political. Rather, they are organizations united for specifically private purposes shared by local people, however large the local groups might become. They are a start in the direction of political participation. To become fully political, they must shift their focus to matters of interest common to all citizens.

Michael Walzer is one of the most respected professors peddling political theory in contemporary American universities. Even his most intense critics concede his unfailing civility and his sincerity in conveying the conclusions that he reaches. He claims to be a democrat, that is, one who sees democracy as an ideal for all people at all times. He is unwilling to temper his democratic enthusiasm in these less buoyant times. He is unfailingly committed to the democratic organization of every aspect of civil society, and this precisely is the commitment that blinds him to the central problem of the political philosophy of the American founding: the problem of reconciling democracy with human rights.

Walzer is also a committed socialist, and most of the essays compiled for this volume, *Radical Principles,* were originally published in the pages of

Dissent, the American socialists' quarterly. He is, however, a socialist with a difference. He concedes the failure of the Soviet experiment with socialist government and hopes that the socialism and the democracy that he advocates can be reconciled.

Democracy is a form of government that makes any discussion of the ends of politics very difficult. Yes, each group of candidates offers a program at each election, but no group is capable of claiming that its solution to any particular problem is definitive for all time. The authors of *The Federalist* understood this very well and did not speak of a grand design for American society within the pages of that book. They were merely establishing a form of government. Future generations of Americans, speaking through their elected representatives, would have to define the direction, and the ends, of the policies of government. By incorporating the right to revolution into the Constitution's amending processes, the American founders secured the permanent right of the people to alter or abolish the forms of government to which they might become accustomed. Whenever the American people become dissatisfied with the long-term budget projections of one administration, they vote another one into office. Rigid projections, even for an ideal future, are difficult as long as the people retain the power to elect people to change the plans.

Socialism arises from the belief that "bourgeois" life is too concerned with people as production functions and insufficiently concerned with the breadth of human interests. In *The German Ideology,* Karl Marx sketched a situation in which the socialist citizen would hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening and play the critic after dinner. The image delights everyone who believes himself stifled by the routine of modern, specialized, mechanical employment.

Socialists before Walzer have noted that few people are sufficiently diverse in their talents that they could be good at any of these activities, let alone the other varieties of possibilities that might occur to some folks. Others have noted the curiously apolitical character of this socialist "ideal." Oscar Wilde commented that the problem with socialism is that it would take too many evenings. Walzer sees this as one of the serious objections to socialism. A more accurate depiction of the socialist's day would involve a meeting of the wildlife concerns in the morning, a meeting of the fish commission in the afternoon, a meeting of the medical board in the evening and the discussion of a play after dinner. Each session would be devoted to some aspect of the public's business, and everyone would be invited. Marx's socialist "ideal" had involved a curiously isolated individual. Walzer reinserts him into political activity and makes politics the dominant part of his life. Not that average people will really get involved on a continuing basis in deciding such matters. Walzer's

"Clearly [*The Backyard Revolution*] is a visionary politics for an age of sophisticated despair."

—*The New Republic*

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socialist ideal treats us as a nation of kibitzers and contends that those who have been making decisions owe the kibitzers a respectful hearing on the occasions that they do not get involved.

Such openness to kibitzing presupposes a future without much accomplishment. With each proposal for action comes another round of debate, another round of studies, a consideration of counterproposals and a new decision, followed by openings for new kibitzers. Walzer's socialism makes no provision for accomplishment after the decision has been reached. In the place of Marx's man in the fields, Walzer has found the future socialist in an eternal faculty meeting.

The most curious feature of this conception of socialism as a continuous kibitz is that the basic premises of socialism are not open for discussion. Socialism originates with a conception of human history as class warfare in which the rich masters are overcome by the poor slaves in succeeding sequences until finally classes are abolished and a state of material equality is achieved. Walzer adheres rigidly to the idea of equality as a goal of politics and conceives of this equality in material terms. He does not believe that money is an appropriate reward for the expression of diverse talents; pride of success and satisfaction of achievement should suffice. Access to human needs should be distributed equally. The responsibility for defining and meeting those needs is society's rather than the individual's. Thus, the provision of "human needs" (even private ones) becomes a public province. Walzer adheres firmly to this goal. He hopes that it might be reached through democratic procedures, but he never addresses the possibility that it might be reversed through majority rule. He also fails to indicate where he might find enough folks sharing his indifference to wealth as a reward to bring about his first victory.

The political theory of the American founding, of course, moves in precisely the opposite direction. It starts with the premise of human equality, but recognizes that original equality as a rather miserable condition. Achievement requires equal liberty, but the diverse talents of free people do result in material differences. *The Federalist* claimed that the first responsibility of government is to protect the natural rights, that is, diverse and unequal talents for acquiring property, of different people. Different people will find their reward in different kinds of property—some in their religion, some in their status as prestigious professors, most people, most commonly, in the store of riches that they are able to attain. The only equality required by democracy is the equality expressed when each citizen has the opportunity to cast one vote on election day. The equality required if a democracy is to secure natural rights must leave to each citizen the opportunity to achieve as much inequality in wealth and status as he can, allowing us to honor those occupations that we find worthy and to overlook, or suppress, those that degrade the character of democratic citizens.

No government can safely remain indifferent to the opinions formed among its citizens. Garry Wills is right in observing that the authors of *The Federalist* recognized this and assumed that the democratic form of government required a decent people. Publius, however, wrote to a people who were in close contact with the roots of liberty and who understood the need to nurture those roots in succeeding generations. These three tomes record our distance from those roots.

Securing the American experiment in liberty requires an understanding of the relationship between the principles of liberty and the form of government that we have, between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. *The Federalist* provides that understanding better than any other single book. Each of these volumes, in its own way, falsifies that understanding. Boyte simply assumes the virtue of those who are active in causes that he likes; he proceeds on the assumption that democracy can be decent if it degenerates into rule by people pursuing policies that work to their personal benefit, with no moderation for the concerns of the entire society. Walzer understands that he is arguing against the American experiment with liberty, but he believes that the equality that he espouses is preferable to liberty. Wills also understands that he is arguing against the political argument of the American founding, but he is clever enough to know that he must disguise his argument to render it palatable. Americans simply will not buy an overt denunciation of their heritage. These volumes provide eloquent testimony to their authors' ingenuity at wrapping the message in different book jackets. The political question of the coming generation is whether the American people have retained the character to rise above these falsifications of their heritage. □

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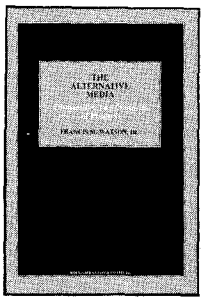

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Counterfeiting Scholarship & Idealism

William Appleman Williams: *Empire as a Way of Life;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Charles R. Kesler

Last August *The Nation* devoted a special issue to William Appleman Williams's "astonishing analysis" of the course of American imperialism. The issue was distributed to delegates to the Democratic National Convention as a "history lesson" proving that both "internal reconstruction" and a "democratic" foreign policy require Americans to "come to terms with our life as an empire." With this essay, now published in expanded form as *Empire as a Way of Life,* Williams has done this nation a valuable service—even for those of us who do not read *The Nation* regularly: he shows historical revisionism stripped of its scholarly apparatus, though not of its scholarly pretensions, and standing forth proudly as the continuation of radical or new-left politics by other means.

As with all expressions of political radicalism, *Empire* consists of two vastly disproportionate parts: a tortured and voluminous critique of the American past and present ("empire") and a vague and exiguous promise of a radically new American future ("community"). According to Williams, American history has so far been defined by the question, "How does one use the evil of empire to sustain, extend, and guarantee the good of freedom, prosperity and security?" To demonstrate this continuing tradeoff, Williams, the so-called "dean" of revisionist historians, has to revise and otherwise distort a great deal of history; but he eases the burden by coolly eliminating all footnotes and bibliographical information so that it is virtually impossible to check the source of his evidence and the context of his quotations. Although I give him credit for trying to wipe off his fingerprints, his counterfeiting does not go undetected. Witness, for example, some of the factual errors contained in the book: that the Chinese have never had an empire; that John Quincy Adams introduced "amendments to the Constitution to legitimize secession"; that Lincoln addressed the Young Men's Christian Association in the 1830's (the Y.M.C.A., according to Carl Degler, did not exist in the U.S. until 1851). It must, besides, be a strange kind of "empire" that makes newly acquired territories into states and admits them to the Union on equal terms with the older states, guaranteeing to each a republican form of government.

As a psychopathology of the American way of life, *Empire* culminates in false and increasingly bizarre indictments of the United States for provoking the Second World War, the Cuban missile crisis and the taking of our hostages in Iran. As for the Soviets, Williams holds that we have nothing to fear from them, for even if the Soviet Union were to replace us as "the superior imperial power," we "do not stand to lose much by that" since "a rational conception of American security . . . does not depend upon the kind of global superiority" that we have enjoyed from 1945 until recently. Apparently we do not stand to lose much because American imperialism is fundamentally the same as Soviet imperialism, which suggests that America is fundamentally the same as the Soviet Union. It seems that *Empire as a Way of Life* could just as well have been written about the Soviet Union—though as it stands it could very well have been written *in* the Soviet Union.

But what if America were, or had been, an imperial power? Is there no difference between an "empire for liberty" (Jefferson's phrase) and an empire for tyranny? Why is empire per se an evil? Williams gives no clear answer to this simple question, except to suggest that the assertion of rule or "power" by one independent people over another, or even by one "unit of population" over another, is somehow wrong. But how does a population become a "people," and what entitles a people to independence? Here he might have resorted, as American statesmen have for two hundred years, to the Declaration of Independence as an authoritative guide to the principles of free government. Instead he adverts to the Declaration, at points scattered throughout the book, as a Machiavellian charter justifying a single act of anti-imperialism for the sake of a thousand acts of future imperialism; proclaiming the American Revolution in order to silence all future revolutions; dismantling the British Empire in order to build the American one.

In fact neither part of his accusation is true. The Declaration is not an anti-colonial or anti-imperial manifesto, but neither is it the ideological expression of America's secret ambitions. The Declaration states simply that one people has decided "to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another," bands which in better times it had consented to maintain. There is no claim of an automatic right for colo-

Mr. Kesler is a graduate student at Harvard.

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nial peoples to rise up against an imperial power. A people has a right to independence not because of a *national* right to self-determination but because of the *natural* rights of men—rights based on the fundamental truth "that all men are created equal." This right establishes that the just powers of government derive from the consent of the governed and exist to secure the rights of the governed. It is when government becomes destructive of these ends that revolution is justified.

Williams criticizes Henry Kissinger for his "imperial evangelicalism" in intervening "to overthrow an *elected* government in Chile"—as if any elected government were just or even nonimperial. But as Thomas Jefferson said, "an elective despotism was not the government we fought for." No people has a right to cast off colonial government or to new-model its own government if its intention is to institute a regime that does not respect men's unalienable rights and rest on the consent of the governed. Kissinger's judgment on Chile ("I don't see why we need to stand by and permit a country to go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people") is perfectly intelligible when set within this theoretical context.

Unfortunately Kissinger never employed this context, for reasons that would be quite agreeable to Williams (since both men are in the uncomfortable position of constantly denouncing a great evil without being able to say why it is wrong). What they share, fundamentally, is the language of German social science and philosophy of history, which leads them to denounce particular *Weltanschauungs* without regard to the fact that all "world views" are created equal. Williams denies, in other words, that there is an objective difference between right and wrong; consequently, morality can only be measured by proximity to the ideal of "community," which can be realized only in a society organized on quite different principles from the present "capitalist marketplace society." In particular the "principles of private property," which are unavoidably in tension with the ideal of community, will have to go.

The extent of Williams's radicalism can be gathered from his misrepresentation of Madison's argument for the extended sphere (contained in *The Federalist* No. 10), which he portrays as an argument for a limitless empire. Not only does this ignore the political problem that Madison thought the extended sphere could partially solve—the tendency of a republican government to fall prey to majority faction—but it ignores the important qualifications on the efficacy of the sphere revealed in *The Federalist* No.'s 49, 51 and 63. But then there is no need to worry about a majority faction or the insecurity of minority rights in a "community" in which all selfishness and love of honor—manifested in private property and politics—have been abolished and all liberty reduced to serving the perfection of this new community.

"Turn away from empire and begin to create a community," Williams exhorts us. But the community we are to create among ourselves will also enable us to be "citizens . . . of the world." How are we to be a separate community united by bonds of locality, history and practice and yet be open to citizenship in the world? It cannot be that the rights proclaimed in the Declaration are universal, so that the American Revolution has universal significance, for Williams denies that these natural rights are anything more than conscious inventions of Jefferson and the other revolutionaries, designed to legitimize their revolt and justify their new empire. He condemns them as a "transformation of the specific Rights of Free Englishmen, rooted in communal experience, into an abstract, unlimited assertion of leadership of all humankind." The very same criticism, in almost the same language, was made by John C. Calhoun in 1848 and echoed by Chief Justice Taney in the Dred Scott decision in 1857, and has been revived in this century by such friends of the Confederacy as Willmoore Kendall and M. E. Bradford. That a Marxist historian should agree with the father of the "positive good" theory of Negro slavery, the author of the Supreme Court's most infamous decision, and two influential modern conservatives may seem odd; but left and right meet in opposition to the central idea of the Western tradition: that man's reason is capable of knowing, by the nature of things, the difference between just and unjust, good and evil, noble and base, and that man is capable of guiding human action according to these distinctions.

Today both left and right walk in darkness, though each walks in a different direction—the left toward the future, the right toward the past. In neither direction will they find the principles of human freedom or human happiness, and America cannot trust either to rescue it from its present peril. To defend ourselves against the tyrannical empire of the Soviet Union, which lives only to destroy us and grows only at our expense, will require not only the kind of "global superiority" that we earned in World War Two, but also the wisdom to use that superiority. To win the victory and to deserve the victory, the "empire of liberty" must fight in the light of reason and in the name of justice. □

"One can be one's true self only in the community of others. The family is for most people the crucible in which their humanity is forged. . . . In giving we receive. In binding ourselves we are made free. In linking our own personalities with those of others we discover who we truly are."

—James Hitchcock speaking at The Rockford Institute's "The Family: America's Hope" Conference

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Kiddycult & Newsense

Maurice Girodias: *The Frog Prince: An Autobiography;* Crown Publishers; New York.

John Mosedale: *The Men Who Invented Broadway: Damon Runyon, Walter Winchell and Their World;* Richard Marek Publishers; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

> The facts of infancy may be vital when they refer to a prodigy such as Mozart, interesting when relevant to a rebel such as Shelley, valuable when they show the growth of a man out of his place, as Poe; but . . . .
>
> A.J.A. Symons
> *The Quest for Corvo*

While much has been written and said about the exploitation of children, there is one aspect of the new vogue of kiddies in culture that is overlooked. The children in this case serve as models or surrogates for adults. There is nothing of Shaw's chestnut about youth being wasted on the young about this practice, which could be called kiddycult; in this case, the child is taken out of time, and doesn't necessarily want to exchange roles. Moreover, too great an emphasis on the chronological age of the child removes him or her from the realm of kiddycult; the image is blurred. For example, in the filmed version of *The Tin Drum,* Oskar is not a child who fits this description. He is too obviously a child: he looks like one, sounds like one, dresses like one. The edges are hard and defined. When he seduces his nanny, the whole thing is quite revolting. Chronologically Oskar is supposed to be of an age that would cause little upset to most if he were discovered having a romp in the backseat of a Chevy with a college coed. But he is a three-year-old in terms of physical development. Performing the suspension of disbelief (I doubt if Coleridge ever dreamed that this much will power would be required in a theater), ignoring the fact that the child on the screen is indeed a child and will continue to be one after the cameras stop rolling is not enough—the disparity between the teen-age girl and the prepubescent boy is too enormous for Oskar to slip into the kiddycult category. He is too much in time.

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of Manufacturing Engineering.

But consider Roman Polanski's filmed version of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles.* Mr. Polanski has displayed an interest (albeit a perverted one) in youngsters for quite some time, long before it was fashionable. He took up with Nastassia Kinski, his leading lady, when she was 15. There is no question that age distinctions blur for him. This blurring is carried over and manifested in *Tess.* That is, while the movie naturally differs from the novel in form and therefore content, there is a more subtle difference. When we first see Tess Durbyfield in the novel, she is taking part in a dance of virgins, a dance of innocents. Note that well. And if you don't, Hardy makes sure that you will. Although she is constantly bashed and buffeted by tidal waves surging from a sea of outrageous fortune, she still keeps an essential innocence about her. She believes in Higher Things; she has a childlike belief that things will turn out for the best. For example, after Tess tells Angel Clare how she was debauched, Hardy emphasizes how Tess could win Angel back through wiles. But she doesn't; her values won't allow it. Hardy's Tess is a child wronged whom we feel sorry for because she is a child who was molested by an inveterate rake. She is forced to become a woman; time is accelerated, but there is no question of what she is at any given time.

The television ad for the film advises us that Tess is "a victim of her own provocative beauty." No innocent Polanski's Tess. Slam, bang—she's in the arms of Stoke-D'Uberville with little more than *pro forma* resistance. The scene is not revolting, deliberately not revolting. We don't see an older man taking advantage of a teen. Rather, Nastassia Kinski looks young, yes, but she is meant to be perceived as someone who could be an adult, not like Oskar. She's chronologically veiled in a fog. She's kiddycult material.

Another example is Brooke Shields. The Brooke Shields in the Calvin Klein ads falls into the Oskar category. There she is obviously a 15-year-old, and the idea of her being a sex object causes a profound disgust. But there is another Brooke Shields, one that does fall into the kiddycult category, as her 15 years are blurred and she appears only as someone young and someone to be admired by her elders as a peer. This one can be seen in an ad for Wella Balsam hair conditioner. The full-page, color magazine ad (I saw it in *Redbook,* not *Seventeen* or *16)* is simply a near life-size straight-on photo of Shields's head and a portion of her shoulders. Part of the copy reads: "I love Wella Balsam. . . . And so will you." She is identified by name. This ad places Shields in a line of Wella girls. The line includes Cheryl Ladd of "Charlie's Angels" fame, Priscilla Presley, ex-wife of the late Elvis, and Marjorie Wallace, a former Miss World. These three women have two things in common: they have showy manes and they are desirable to a number of men, which means that a number

"*The Frog Prince* is full of redeeming social significance."
—*New York Times Book Review*

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of women would like to emulate them. In effect, then, the Brooke Shields ad holds her up as such a model. She is decidedly not a 15-year-old here, for what adult woman would take the advice of a 15-year-old about anything other than the efficacy of an acne medication?

There is something not quite right in a society that increasingly turns its attention to children and, in doing so, robs the children of whatever innocence or childishness (i.e. being like a child in a positive sense: eager, fresh, vigorous) they have. Statistics show that drug abuse, sexual activity and crime are all up in the lower age groups. Apparently, it's pretty tough these days just being a normal, all-round kid, worried about homework assignments and cutting the lawn (getting out of doing both, that is), not about being old beyond one's years.

Growing up these days is quite like growing up in France in the 1920's and 30's, at least if you were Maurice Girodias. Girodias is the founder of Olympia Press, the publishing house in the skin trade that admittedly did publish some outstanding authors (Beckett, Nabokov), just as his father's Obelisk Press did (Durrell). These presses are called *avant-garde.* With a few exceptions, such as those noted, *sleazy* is a more precise term for the presses.

Girodias's autobiography, *The Frog Prince,* is a book that looks as decadent as one might expect: it brings whips and chains to mind. The dust jacket is black with silver artwork and lettering. The book continues the motif: it is black with a silver-foil spine, the only spine of that type I've ever seen. Perhaps I go to the wrong libraries.

In the prologue Girodias admits that the only reason he wrote the book was for money. At least he is up front about it. Then he breaks into gibberish. The following is representative:

> The divine Eros is the motor of the continuum, whether the Vatican likes it or not; and it's He who writes the story of our world, not the Holy Father. The tribulations of Eros in our time have occupied my entire life, and my father's life before mine. Our two stories therefore appear as only one in the continuum, my life being nothing but an intensified repetition of his own. Just as it took generations of mountain climbers to conquer Everest, it took a dedicated team of specialists, father and son, to trigger the sexual revolution.

And there are only 404 pages left to go. But stay. An easily overlooked sentence on the flashy dust jacket says that *The Frog Prince* is just the first part of a three-part autobiography.

In this work, Girodias doesn't get far beyond puberty. However, that's not easy to ascertain as he is a premier kiddycultist. You'd swear that young Maurice is the senior Maurice. The child may be the father of the man, but this is absolutely ridiculous. Girodias uses the blurring technique: he is very stingy with dates and ages, so one is often reduced to performing addition and subtraction in trying to figure out how old he is at any given time. The results are hard to believe. He feels a "total refusal and rejection of the false, cheap, and criminal society in which we were born," so his reaction is "Alienation! Anarchy! Let fly the black flag!" He's 11 years old. At age 14, much happens. His father ("the only education I ever received from him had to do exclusively with the appreciation of women") is a "little anxious" about the way Maurice kisses the hands of the countesses to whom he introduces his son. Sure enough, father and son fall in love with the same woman. Shades of *My Son, My Son.* Later that year, "a large voluptuous woman of about thirty" works herself into a "romantic passion" over our 14-year-old hero. He dismisses her because she is a "blooming bourgeoise." Maurice is still alienated, indeed, "even more at odds with the system, with whatever it was that made those people tick." His father doesn't try to set the boy straight, rather, he treats the 14-

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One Ms. Alexandra Penney, described in a *New York Times Book Review* ad as an "editor and journalist whose articles appear frequently in *The New York Times Magazine . . . Vogue . . . Glamour . . . Harper's Bazaar . . .*" has published a book entitled *How to Make Love to a Man.* We naively thought that problem had been solved—according to evolutionists, when the species emerged from the waters and settled on dry surfaces; according to creationists, through the experiments of Eve and Potiphar's wife; according to classicists, by Helen of Troy. Obviously we underestimated the American ability to forget that the wheel had already been invented. Yet, after examining Ms. Penney's picture, which adorns the ad, and noticing the awesome mental power revealed in the titles of chapters: "What's the Big Difference Between Men and Women?" or "On Aggressiveness—How to Get What You Want Sexually Without Seeming Pushy or Unfeminine" we have little doubt that her manual will sell well in hardware stores. □

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year-old like a 24- or 34-year-old (the blurring of kiddycult). He gives Maurice a copy of Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* to read, then follows that up with the galley proofs of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer.* Perhaps I have a low gag level, but a novel about Miller's anatomy, which seems to have more in common with the Alaskan Pipeline than with conventional human physiology, is in my estimation nauseating, hardly the thing that I would have a 14-year-old take in hand. An octavo volume of the Marquis de Sade is just as exemplary. Not only does his father have Maurice read the book, but he has him design the cover. Keep in mind that this is no young Evelyn Waugh practicing with pen and ink; before Girodias makes the revelation about this commission, there is no indication that he is an artist.

Of age 15 he says, "I was fast turning myself into an introverted sex maniac," and justifies it with the observation, "But what can one do, considering that one cannot take a mistress at the age of eight?" At this point, there is still two-thirds of the book left to go. It seems that Girodias has taken Frank Harris's *My Life and Loves,* an enormous volume of hyperbolic trash and nonsense, as his model. When Girodias isn't dealing with his sexual fantasies, he's babbling about a fanatic Eastern-influenced religious cult in which he becomes a "knight." This group believed that a reincarnation of Julius Caesar would emerge from a castle near Prague and politically unite Europe, except for England and the Soviet Union, which, I suppose, were producing the wrong kind of vibes. World War II upset the cult's plans. It didn't matter much to Maurice, however; he only wanted to debauch one of the young maidens in the group.

Girodias is propornography and anti-censorship. He is the type of person who defends porno by insisting that it is capital-A Art. But in *The Frog Prince* he stands self-condemned. That is,

throughout the autobiography sex—or, more accurately, rutting—is the primary concern. When Girodias finally gets a woman of no repute where he wants her, he realizes that he really doesn't know what to do with her, even though he describes himself as a "professor of erotic technology" at age 15. His solution? He calls to mind scenes from *Lady Chatterley's Lover, The Memoirs of Fanny Hill, The Tropic of Capricorn* and Frank Harris's book, and performs accordingly. I have no doubt that Girodias would be the first to enter the dock in defense of these and less-esteemed books as capital-A Art, yet he himself treats them as nothing more than sex manuals.

With chronological (not psychological or moral) adults like Girodias running around loose, no wonder so many children of our day are becoming warped, condemned to spend their childhood days in a childhood they can never have, in an adult world not of their making.

* * *

As I write, various segments of the media aren't doing so well. Carol Burnett has won a $1.6-million judgment at the expense of the *National Enquirer.* Now the *Enquirer* faces Ed McMahon ($2.5 million), Rory Calhoun ($10 million), Paul Lynde ($10 million) and Shirley Jones and Marty Ingels ($20 million). The *Enquirer* will have to push a lot of papers at supermarkets, it seems. Los Angeles Dodger Steve Garvey and his wife are awaiting a June date when they will take *Post-Newsweek's Inside Sports* to court, an $11.2-million suit. Stephen Hess, a Brookings Institution senior fellow and former Nixon White House aide, has just released *The Washington Reporters,* a book that reportedly lays bare the relative free hand that the Washington press corps has in making stories. Meanwhile, the broadcast journalists are busy making up excuses to cover their lapses in handling the Reagan assassination attempt. And the *Washington Post* has been caught red-handed in hustling a Pulitzer Prize for a fabrication.

It is extremely fortuitous for all concerned—readers and viewers as well as reporters and editors—that John Mosedale's *The Men Who Invented Broadway* has been published. Today's journalists—even those under carefully coifed creations—often seem like a pretty shabby lot at bottom, but they are pristine compared to many of their counterparts of the past 100 years. News—hard news, that is, facts—is in short supply these days, having been replaced by the pseudostories created by TV journalism's insatiable need for stunning shots and the print media's turn to more feature stories as a means to maintain readership against the onslaught of video display. As unbelievable as it sounds, today's newsmen (Note: women are implied in that term; *newspeople* is a word that I can't bring myself to use as it smacks too much of the local evening news broadcasts presented in every major city I've been in) are probably doing a better job than their ancestors.

Before proceeding, I must point out two things. First, although Mosedale's book is touted as a biography of Damon

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Runyon and Walter Winchell, it really isn't. Second, although Broadway figures in the title and runs through the book, it is only a convenient thoroughfare. Mosedale does provide a fair amount of information about the two men. Actors, actresses, gangsters, the Stork Club and other fixtures of Broadway are all there. But the men, the street and the people are in the foreground of the panoramic view of New York journalism, primarily in the early part of this century. Papers like the *American, Journal, Herald, News, Times, World, Tribune:* these are the real story. Runyon and Winchell are the hooks to hang it on.

The war that went on between Hearst and Pulitzer for newspaper dominance, which is fairly common knowledge (e.g. that war being responsible for the Spanish-American War), is recounted by Mosedale. He really shines when he brings to light some of the seamier, less well-known stories.

It is generally accepted that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were out to get Richard Nixon. Consider this ditty written by Ambrose Bierce and published by William Randolph Hearst. The occasion was the assassination of Governor-elect William Goebel of Kentucky:

> The bullet that pierced Goebel's breast
> Cannot be found in all the West;
> Good reason; it is speeding here
> To stretch McKinley on his bier.

That was February 4, 1900. On September 6, 1901, President McKinley was shot.

Newspapers are devoting more and more ink and expensive newsprint to "People in the News" features (and except for the odd natural disaster or volcano, what else is there?) and "Family Living," "Weekend" and "Fashion" sections, while their reporting of current events is becoming a headline service. Depth is out; impact is in. In 1919 Joseph Medill Patterson and Robert R. McCormick decided to put out a newspaper. It was based on pictures and stories, with an emphasis on the former and an abbreviation of the latter. Mosedale quotes a promise in the first issue of the *Illustrated Daily News:* " 'You can read it without eye-strain.' " Says Mosedale, "Patterson had the common touch." *Vulgar* is a more accurate adjective. Today's papers are doing the same sort of thing, only they won't openly make such promises.

When Damon Runyon signed on with Hearst's *American* in 1911, he was assigned to the sports department. As anyone even slightly familiar with the sports page knows, sports-writers employ extreme stylistic vagaries and license to kill standard newspaper prose. Part of the reason for this flamboyance is that they must offset the dry statistics that are part of the games. Runyon is a typical example of the best. He wrote sports stories in prose("'Pitching with consummate craft, Christy Mathewson, the master workman of baseball, held the cham-

". . . extremely stimulating and well-edited."

-W. F. Buckley

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pion Athletics runless for eight wonderful innings at the Polo Grounds yesterday afternoon. . . .' ") and verse (" 'Never his like again—/Never a handy/Guy like Sande/Bootin' them babies in!' ") But Runyon didn't stay on the sports page. He didn't leave it, but he was assigned to straight news stories, too. For example, when General John J. Pershing went after Pancho Villa, Runyon was pulled from the New York Giants' training camp to cover the event. He covered World War I. The Hall-Mills murder case, the Snyder-Gray murder case and many other big stories of the day were chronicled by Runyon. His approach to sports (see the examples above) and hard news was the same. Runyon authored a number of stories of fiction featuring characters with names that sound like they're from John Gay via Bertolt Brecht: Dave the Dude, Lola Sapola, Louie the Lug, etc. Not the most sophisticated pieces, and with good reason—Runyon was basically a sports-writer. Today's reporter typically starts at one desk (obits, religion, etc.), then works his way out of it—at least that's the usual route. A point in favor (to stick with a sports metaphor) of today's newsmen is that they are what they are supposed to be; sports-writers tend not to cover murder cases. At least newspaper publishers are responsible to this extent.

Walter Winchell was the ne plus ultra of gossip columnists. He probably wouldn't have understood the characterization, but would have preferred something in *Varietyese*. His start in the field is worth noting as it says something about what gossip is all about. Winchell performed in vaudeville for a number of years. Mosedale reports that one day while on the circuit, in a Chicago theater, Winchell typed up a sheet of gossip about his fellows and put it on a bulletin board. The name of the sheet is prophetic: *Newsense*. Let the sound be an echo to the sense of what it and its progeny are.

Winchell grew to have imperious power. The only one with like power today, a man who has chosen not to exert it (score one for today's team), is Walter Cronkite. This comparison might seem forced as Winchell covered actresses, actors and their crowd from Table 50 at the Stork Club, but that's only part of the picture. For example, Lepke Buchalter, one of the public enemies of the 30's, turned himself in to Winchell. Winchell turned Lepke in to J. Edgar Hoover, an up-and-coming G-man and a friend of Winchell's. In 1933 Winchell attacked the nazis and became a public enemy of the nazis. Domestic politics were in his purview. He and President Franklin Roosevelt were pals of a sort. People read and listened to Winchell; he had influence.

He was not above using that influence for his own ends. Winchell was the master of the blind item: the line with a few clues (often red herrings) that is meant to be unraveled by the reader. Many innocent people were put in the position of publicly answering "When did you stop beating your wife?"-type questions, which often ended up as scoops for Winchell. Mosedale points out that Winchell had a "Drop Dead" list. Essentially, those who ended up on it—those who rubbed Winchell the wrong way—became, for all practical purposes, nonpersons. Winchell could be as congenial as Vlad the Impaler.

Having read *The Men Who Invented Broadway,* I have a new perspective on the media. Dan Rather, Mike Wallace and the rest of the "60 Minutes" gang strike me only as eager cub reporters as they crash into someone's office, cameras rolling, or show up in the midst of a war not of their making. The *New York Times* seems but a shadow of its former self. And the *National Enquirer*—even in its heyday of grotesque stories—is limp in comparison to MacFadden's *Evening Graphic,* in which the "cosmograph," or faked picture (scissors and glue), was originated. Even Howard Cosell is partially tolerable, as I know he'll only talk sports—for the time being, anyway. □

The Carter Story as Vaudeville

Betty Glad: *Jimmy Carter: In Search of the Great White House;* W. W. Norton & Co.; New York.

by Mike Lavelle

If Jimmy Carter had been re-elected this exhaustive profile of him would have been near the top of the best-seller list. The book is 507 pages of personal and political minutiae which, condensed into its relevant parts, could pass as a cynical campaign primer on how to sustain style without substance, myth with a scintilla of truth. Jimmy Carter's moral posture bordered on religious zealotry as a campaign tactic, political expediency as an art form and the Peter Principle as the result. Unfortunately, the level of Carter's incompetency matched the zenith of his ambition: the Presidency of these United States.

What is amazing and a bit frightening concerning the rise of Jimmy Carter from peanut farmer to President is the naiveté and/or complicity of our national media which, though not overtly stated in Betty Glad's book, forms a sort of backdrop.

The author, a professor of political science at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, began the book in August 1976—not in time to influence the '76 election, and, with Jimmy Carter's dismal record as President from 1976 to 1980, it was neither help nor hindrance in his 1980 re-election campaign. The book is not an ideological

Mr. Lavelle's latest book is The Many Faces of Jane Fonda *(Green Hill Publishers).*

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potboiler meant either to praise or to condemn. It is, rather, a cold-blooded inquiry closer to a dissection than either a dissertation or a diatribe. The first page of the preface states: "When I began my research in August of 1976, there were no listings for Jimmy Carter in the Library of Congress card catalogue. Though stories about Carter's past and his character had been flooding the media for the preceding eight months, no independently investigated histories of his life had yet appeared. I quickly discovered that many of the stories circulating about Carter—including some originating with Carter and his family—were factually inaccurate." The author is being excessively polite and remains so throughout the book. The last two chapters comprise 31 pages of psychobabble as though the author is reluctant to state some conclusions. She cannot spit it out. After 507 pages, over 300 interviews, 14 books and archives, 15 newspapers and 10 pages of "source notes," she has uncovered slogans, symbols, campaign-strategy notes and instant history written on the run by and for journalists, but she reveals little more than what she said in the preface.

Ever since Carter made the decision in 1972 to run for the White House, he had to build a façade of liberalism acceptable to the Eastern establishment while retaining a conservative image in the South and meld both to appeal to a national constituency. As he had befriended George Wallace in the past, he would now have to disavow him. Where he had been a hawk on the Vietnam War, he would now have to become dovish. Carter had a tremendous advantage in making those shifts. The *New York Times* and *Rolling Stone* are organs of upper-class liberalism that are eager to be and are easily fooled by anyone who embraces their left-liberal style via speeches, poverty chic and references to their counterculture heroes. The fact that such journalists are seldom, if ever, read by a more conservative middle- and lower-middle class is a plus for any aspiring politician who is unprincipled in the pursuit of the White House.

Giving a speech on Law Day (May 1, 1974) at the University of Georgia, Carter impressed left-freak journalist Hunter Thompson of the *Rolling Stone* with references to Niebuhr, Dylan and a few folk songs. The so-called "counterculture" was duly thrilled. For the blue-collar factory worker Carter suddenly dons a set of work clothes and dips his hands into a chute cascading a stream of peanuts. For *Playboy:* "Lust in my heart," for fundamental Baptists: "Amazing Grace," for the Wildlife Federation and the Sierra Club: "Fishin' and swimmin' when I was a boy," for the industrialist: "I'm a nuclear scientist," for the small businessman: "I'm a small businessman," for the poverty-chic types: "I come from one of the poorest parts of the country," for the Wallacites: "I'm a redneck," and, last but not least, for absolute fools and new-class intellectuals: "I'll never lie to you." It's all there in Betty Glad's book, but she fails to connect one part to the other. If she had left out half of the book or used it to cover the media which so foolishly and incompetently covered this most competent campaigner and incompetent President, it would have been a much more interesting book.

As they did in the 1980 campaign with John Anderson, the national media can anoint a Presidential candidate and proceed to sell him to the general public. The initial selling starts in the pages of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—the liberal herd follows. Before this *new face* appears on the national scene it has already become from six months to a year old in the editorial offices of the liberal establishment.

More disturbing are the questions of how a national media that so relentlessly axed the image of Richard Nixon could be so inept concerning the campaign-strategy façade of Jimmy Carter. That façade began to crumble only under the realities of the Presidential office—in Iran, Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua — and unemployment and inflation at home. In truth, the nation suffered because the national media failed in their self-appointed mission. The Peter Principle is no great tragedy when it concerns a local department store, but the leadership of the Western world should not be so casually treated.

The two Presidents in the last twenty years with whom our national media were enamored, John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter, were masters of symbols and slogans but left us a weaker nation and a more cynical people. The media despise Ronald Reagan, and it's easy to understand why. Reagan never fudged. The statement "The Vietnam War was a noble cause" would have been imprudent, if not impossibly out of character, for Jimmy Carter. That Reagan defeated Carter was also a triumph over the media. That campaign, sadly, is hardly mentioned in Betty Glad's book. □

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Of Randomly Savage Human Molecules

Joyce Carol Oates: *A Sentimental Education;* E. P. Dutton; New York.

by Betsy Clarke

Education of any kind would seem to be the last thing Miss Oates's characters need. By and large extensively degreed, even at the beginning of these six stories they have already experienced their share of emotional trauma. Middle-aged Claire Falk, a Friends-of-the-Symphony type in "Queen of the Night," has been divorced by her husband of 26 years. In addition, she has raised an obnoxious son to adulthood. Wesley Sterne, a philosophy professor in "The Precipice," has been hospitalized several times after initiating fistfights against stronger strangers. In "The Tryst," John Reddinger, a prominent businessman, is still affected by his attempt years ago to pick up a woman who turned out to be a man. Daniel Seeley, program director of a cultural radio station, has by chance witnessed one man blowing off the head of another in "A Middle-Class Education." Poet Eleanor Gerhardt of "In the Autumn of the Year" recalls a devastating love affair with a sadistic professor who used to slap her around. And premedical student Duncan Sargent, in the title story, has experienced a nervous breakdown as a teen-ager.

All that is the good news; the worst is yet to come. During the course of these stories Claire Falk marries a drug addict many years her junior who, by the end of the story, is wearing her negligee. Wesley Sterne, a modern-day Man of La Mancha, is presumably beaten to death trying singlehandedly to defend the honor of a girl. John Reddinger's mistress tries to commit suicide in his personal bathroom during his wife's absence. After witnessing the shooting, Daniel Seeley is unable to function for months. In her old age, Eleanor Gerhardt is subjected to a vitriolic monologue by her late lover's son regarding the lives she ruined. And Duncan Sargent seduces his 14-year-old cousin and then beats her to death.

Miss Oates is a competent storyteller. In addition to her provocative plotting, she can set a mood with an economy of words approaching scientific notation. Her recollections of familiar emotions transcribe poignantly onto the page. The thoughts of Antoinette, Duncan Sargent's soon-to-be-deceased cousin, will reveal the most intimate insecurities of adolescence. "Am I close to dying, she thought. Sometimes she sat up in bed, terrified that her heart might *stop.* Why not? Couldn't it? What kept it going from one beat to the next?" A number of her figures reflect the ironic disposition of John Reddinger: "Remarkable, he thought. Life, living. In this body. Now."

Unfortunately, Joyce Carol Oates knows American life in the way that Willie Nelson knows "The Star-Spangled Banner." Much of the phrasing is sure, but some of the content is missing, and the spirit is wrong. Part of the problem is her relentless focus on personal trauma. As in soap operas, the characters are cast as successful professionals, though they have spent their lives as thralls of emotional turmoil. "Do you love me?" is the refrain of these stories. Frequently the question is followed by internal monologues that begin, "But what was love . . . ?"

Their skepticism deserves credit. These characters are among the most unlovable to come along since *In Cold Blood.* When they're not picking fights or beating to death close relatives, they're either performing dress rehearsals for suicides or plotting murder. Notes Claire Falk as her young husband sleeps, "It crossed her mind that she could smother him, with the pillow. If she chose. She was capable of a single great act of strength and he, surprised, bereft in that other world, would have been powerless to withstand her." All of Miss Oates's primary characters either perform, contemplate or witness a violent act.

"Instinct and reason, marks of two natures," Wesley Sterne recites from his hospital bed. In most of these stories the characters express a concern, despite their personal histories, for following the reasonable path. Joyce Carol Oates knows it's no use. To her, human beings are mere amoebas continuously banging against the sides of the universal Petri dish. The scenery of naturalism is everywhere.

Characters blame "fate" or "bad luck" for their plights, which, admittedly, are quite extraordinary. "I'm not to blame," cries Eleanor Gerhardt. "What had happened was an event, it was out of her control . . ." thinks Claire Falk. Wesley Sterne "knows, he knows, something is going to happen, he is being propelled toward its happening . . ." And at the seashore Duncan Sargent observes, "One cannot control anything."

No need to look for motivation, then. (Why, for example, would a beautiful, wealthy, middle-aged woman marry a drug-addicted contemporary of her son?) Or culpability. (Duncan Sargent has been disturbed since at least his tenth birthday.) Reasons and responsibilities, considered so indigenous to human beings and societies as to form the bases of their legal systems, are curiosities in this world ruled by randomly savage molecules. Alas, the educations of these characters serve only to give them a false sense of security.

". . . she may well have captured the spirit of the land."
—*New York Times Book Review*

Miss Clarke is a law student at the University of Illinois and a part-time writer.

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It puzzles me why reviewers complain that Miss Oates's characters all sound alike. Obviously, to Miss Oates, people *are* all alike. She frequently reveals this theory by ironic juxtaposition of social classes. In the title story, Duncan's mother, a doctor's wife, calls the police to her Maine summer home to complain about local vandals. " 'As for the girls,' Mrs. Sargent says later to family members, 'Antoinette especially—I halfway wonder if they're going to be safe on this island.' " Antoinette is, of course, done in by the doctor's son.

Certainly (ask Herman Tarnower) the educated middle class is capable of violence. There is nothing wrong with exploring this phenomenon through the literary medium. Published individually in scattered magazines, these stories may stand as legitimate artistic case studies of middle-class culture gone haywire. But to collect them, especially under a pretentious title like this one, is to represent the bizarre as the everyday. Miss Oates's characters are not our neighbors and friends. Her world is not our world. As a result, the fundamental problem with *A Sentimental Education* is that it tries to teach us something about ourselves that isn't true. □

Reality Probed & Pitied

Kazimierz Brandys: *A Question of Reality;* Charles Scribner's Sons; New York.

Milovan Djilas: *Tito: The Story from Inside;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

by Charles A. Moser

These two brief volumes, superficially quite different, display certain inner connections if only because both authors have undergone the historical experience of Eastern Europe since 1945 and once shared a commitment—now formally abrogated—to the communist vision of society which has been inflicted on that part of the world.

Brandys is a novelist, and *A Question of Reality* is offered as a novel in form, although in fact it is a philosophical essay without any genuine plot. The anonymous narrator, born just before the First World War, dedicated himself to philosophy, art and the theater in the 1930's, then fought with the Polish Home Army during the Second World War. After 1945 he taught for some years; in 1970 he became a "theaterologist" with an office at the National Institute of Fine Arts in Warsaw. The time is now 1976 or thereabouts, and the narrator is in Western Europe attending a conference when he makes the acquaintance of a Polish exile, now a sociologist, who asks him to respond to a questionnaire containing such queries as: "Do you think that the idea of freedom finds its embodiment in the course of history through the evolution of society and the progress of civilization?" The narrator spends his evenings at his hotel recording his responses to such questions as an exercise in the formulation of his own viewpoint on such subjects as history, reality and the quality of his own Polishness, which he constantly emphasizes (to be sure, he intelligently declines to respond to certain questions, although he remarks at one point how "extremely difficult" it is for modern man "not to answer a question"). The narrator is clearly an intellectual and a philosopher, and in no sense an actor on the historical stage except, perhaps, during the Second World War.

Djilas, by way of contrast, was once very much a shaper of history in his native Yugoslavia as a communist leader and close associate of Tito. Renowned for his ruthless cruelty, he broke with Tito in 1953, thereafter spending some years in prison, and more years as an analyst of the new society which he had helped to impose upon Yugoslavia. Djilas knew Tito well during the military struggle of the Second World War and the period of conflict with the Soviet Union before and after the 1948 break between Stalin and Tito, and he has some interesting, though not especially profound, observations to make about Tito during those years. However, Djilas had virtually no contact with Tito during the last quarter-century of his life, and he can tell us little more about him as an individual over that time than can the most ordinary, politically sentient Yugoslav citizen.

Djilas's book purports to be an analysis of Tito as historical hero, something Tito himself apparently believed he was. But *Tito* is, in many respects, an unsatisfactory book, the product of an intellect far less subtle and engaging than Brandys's. Moreover, since Djilas pictures Tito as a mediocre military commander whose bungling cost his partisan troops dear during the Second World War and who was exceedingly solicitous of his own safety, as a ruler whose prime personal motivation was to become an "absolute monarch" who lived in greater luxury than any king

Dr. Moser is professor of Slavic at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

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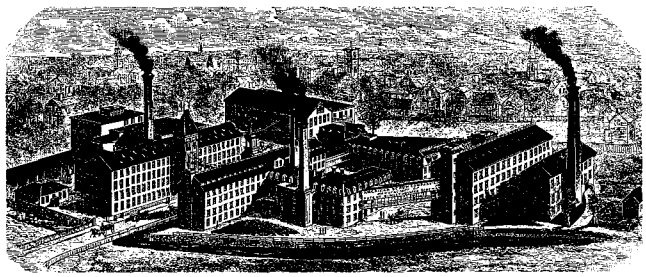
NEXT
in *The Rockford Papers*

One of the results of the Industrial Revolution in a free society such as characterized much of the Western world was a rapid rise in the standard of living. Specifically, this meant a growing abundance of goods and services at reasonable and even cheap prices. This growth of material welfare was even more remarkable in the setting of the Industrial Revolution because it came about with less and less human energy required. So, we had more and more results with less and less effort. On top of that, the specialization in work processes was developed to such a great extent that the individual worker saw virtually no connection between what he or she did and the final product. It would have been almost unnatural at that point for Western society not to have experienced a change in its attitudes in regard to self-sufficiency, self-development and self-reliance. Without the goad of readily evident stark poverty, and without the psychic rewards of assembling, servicing, performing or creating in production, who could possibly get very excited about the prospects of self-fulfillment through hard or harder work? Apparently not many people did, and that lack of interest in self-development changed our attitude from one of self-reliance to one of parasitism.

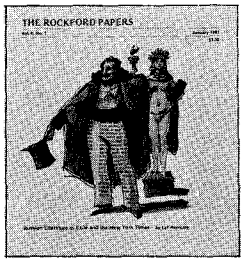


Social and economic parasitism simply means living off someone else. It means we no longer rely on our own efforts and capabilities, but rather depend on someone else to do the work, make the decisions, and put things together. Without the leadership and example of the classic entrepreneurs, and without the direct reward between production and work which came as a result of the Industrial Revolution, with the cushion of savings passed on from one generation to another, and with the abundance of goods and services generated by the Industrial Revolution, it is of little wonder that our attitudes changed to parasitism.

As it has taken us generations to develop and accept the idea of social and economic parasitism and to build the structures and institutions which support it, it might be expected that it would take us generations to return to a widespread attitude of self-reliance. However, one of the great strengths of a free society is its ability to adopt and build on a valid idea. The change does not come all at once, but as individuals and institutions which make the change prove to be successful, others quickly follow. The re-industrialization process will likely follow the same path, with some few stepping out in front and others following in line behind them.

Our future is ahead of us — and it is in our hands. The ideas which could shape that future into strength and growth are extant but admittedly weak. The idea which could hold us back is well-entrenched. The tide may be turning, however, and if it is, the re-industrialization of America will soon commence.

—William E. Cage
"Reindustrialization Realization"
The Rockford Papers
September 1981



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before him, as a leader who created "no lasting spiritual or institutional forms," the reader tends to wonder why Djilas nevertheless proclaims him to have been a "politician of staggering proportions and of great independence."

Perhaps a partial answer to that question lies in a linkage between these two books indicated by the title of *A Question of Reality:* the relationship between art (Brandys's narrator is very much involved with the theater and its illusion of reality and at one juncture even speaks of artists as contemporary saints), politics and reality, or, more precisely, our perception of reality. Thus Djilas argues that art is related to politics "by virtue of its creative momentum"; he also claims—rather in contravention of orthodox Marxist doctrine—that either politics is the master of economic relationships (which we may conditionally regard as "reality"), or else that there is no connection between the political and economic spheres of life.

In any case, Djilas and Brandys share a strong sense of the uncertainty of "reality," which can be highly developed indeed in those who have lived through such historical cataclysms as war and revolution. We Americans may find it hard to grasp this, for we have long been immune to war and revolution on our own soil, and reality seems very firm to us. But Solzhenitsyn addressed a definite warning to us on this score when he said a few years ago: "The proud skyscrapers stand on, jut into the sky, and say: It will never happen here." East Europeans can see things very differently. Djilas terms reality "fickle, treacherous, and dangerous"; Brandys regards it as fragile. His narrator writes:

> Not long ago I read a description of Warsaw [on the day before the German and Soviet attacks of 1939]. The writer remembered a number of details, among others a pretty passenger touching up her makeup in a streetcar. Up to the very last minute, the present looked real, then, suddenly, it went to pieces.

If reality is not so intractable as we imagine, perhaps it can be molded more easily than we suppose. For, as Brandys notes, "words convert facts into social forces": inert facts are of no historical importance until they are articulated. Thus the modern idea has arisen that it should be possible to shape reality through our articulated perceptions of it, much as an artist creates an illusory reality.

Such a generalization is clearly true for past reality, or written history. Djilas remarks that "recorded history is just only toward its masters," and comments on the great interest Tito took in the formulation of his own legend. Brandys also remarks on the communist propensity for self-definition of the approved sort through autobiography: the individual molds his understanding of himself through the shaping of his personal history.

More important than this, however, is the communist belief that our perceptions can alter the reality of the future as well as the past. Thus Djilas distinguishes as one of Tito's outstanding traits his "vigorous resistance to perceived reality," and he asserts that "whatever Tito and the Communist Party stood for was real and would materialize." In short, reality was not determined by such things as economic relationships, but it could be defined through political means. And since politics eventually reduces to articulation, it is no surprise that Djilas sees Tito's speaking ability as one of his outstanding leadership qualities: "it was through frequent interviews and speeches," he says, "that Tito did his job." In short, words—the stuff of culture and the substance of perception—summon reality into being.

And yet words and perceptions must be located in some intellectual framework, a network of ideas which appear logically coherent, and the most widely accepted such framework of our day is probably Marxism, from which Tito and both our authors emerge. Brandys's narrator speaks of the way in which communist ideology has made Polish literature unreal and thus prevented society from attaining knowledge of itself through it. He also makes a very valid generalization about the nature of the Marxist ideological system:

> [T]heories, arguments, and conclusions [were] put together coherently; all you had to do was press a button and everything was explained. . . . But this universal explanation left one behind questionless. The result of accounting for everything was to preclude any possibility of evolution, and so the system of thought is petrified through its own answers.

The early Church, Brandys points out, was "born of debates": Christian theologians have polemicized and argued for centuries over the tenets of their faith, and continue to do so to this day. As an intellectual, Brandys's narrator considers this a desirable state of affairs. In Poland, he argues, ideological rigidity results in stagnation in reality, or so people feel; the country has become a plaything of history, incapable of defining its own destiny.

Djilas takes a different and much less

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consistent position on this issue than Brandys. On the one hand, he argues that "without power, ideas are little more than a pipe dream"; he also recognizes that the symbiotic relationship between ideas and reality means that a "monopoly of power inevitably imposes a monopoly of ideas." He freely admits that during the period when he assisted the communists in the consolidation of their rule, they sternly liquidated all opposition in the drive toward a monopoly of power which they had to seize if they were to modify reality according to their ideas. And yet Djilas parted company with Tito precisely because he wished to fracture the party's monopoly of ideas through relatively free discussion and debate—including the "freedom of information" for which he longs—and that would unerringly undermine its monopoly of power.

At the same time Djilas preaches the historical necessity of the communist revolution in Yugoslavia by arguing that "the roots of Yugoslav independence lie in the power of the revolution." He justifies the suppression of individual liberty within the country by the requirements of national independence. Brandys's narrator quotes—more disapprovingly than not, despite his strong sense of the Polish national destiny—a saying attributed to the novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz: "Beware of nations that prefer liberty to the fatherland." In his confusion Djilas adopts this point of view: if he must choose, national independence is more important than individual liberty.

The modern era is a time of severely conflicting allegiances. Those with strong commitments to what they consider a potentially more just social structure than that which presently exists—like Djilas—are ready to mutilate reality for the sake of that ideal. Their fanaticism is, if anything, more intense now than it was in Djilas's heyday—witness the holocausts in Cambodia and Afghanistan. Brandys's narrator, for instance, is distressed when the fiction

LIBERAL CULTURE

Feudal Bonds

The American society has always been considered among the most egalitarian—even a President may be addressed as Ike—and everybody takes pride in such informality. But a hundred years of the Liberal Culture has subverted this characteristic by establishing the cult of celebrity. And the last 20 years of that mass-cultural practice has firmly established the rule that a celebrity must be declared liberal before he can enter into that feudal interrelationship with the liberal media in which newspapers and magazines pay homage to and perennially acknowledge the presence of a particular name or face in order to engrave it on the popular consciousness. And according to the feudal *Burg* mentality and honor code of the media, the face and the name must associate with liberal *pronunciamientos*, however viciously inane or intellectually sleazy.

This is why liberal magazines in New York always feature the likes of Ms. Shirley MacLaine, an actress with a pea-sized brain, or one Edward Asner, a giant of TV series who happens to be a walking lexicon of cheap radical sloganeering. Of late, the face of Mr. Alan Alda has begun to shine forth from those periodicals which make a buck by prostrating themselves before the celebs, personal paltriness notwithstanding. Women's magazines are especially good sources of this mass-spiritual nourishment: from feminist manifestoes to kitchen-bound gossip almanacs to Seventh Avenue oracles, they all celebrate Mr. Alda. His trademark is a sort of handsome boyishness with an expression of mass-manufactured, prepackaged innocence on his face; his lankiness and bonhomie recall the young Jimmy Stewart, but without the latter's humorous charm. Where Stewart was into patriotism and American values, Alda is into liberalism, consumerism, radical rhetoric, conservationism and antisexism.

Mr. Alda's career proves the formula: after an actor has completed his apprenticeship in ear-wiggling and bedroom calisthenics, he must publicly declare his liberalism. Statements like the following will do: "We must all be responsive to the needs of the needy!" "We must never allow the rich to tell us what to do!" (This maxim practically excludes Mr. Alda from telling us anything, as he is *very* rich; he just keeps conveniently forgetting about it.) Then this liberal actor's career will begin to skyrocket, prompted by some magic propellant.

Few American outlets of opinion have failed to report on the workings of Mr. Alda's mind, not even such an organ of traditional common sense as *Reader's Digest*. The sad part of the story is that Mr. Alda's mind has never gone beyond the developmental stage of the average sophomore. His subtle philosophy can all be condensed into a single, liberal precept: "Let's bring compassion, justice and affluence to everybody, but don't ask me how—it's not *my* business, all I want is the punishment of all those who do not want the same."

The question whether anyone would *not* like to dispense compassion, justice and welfare to everyone never enters Mr. Alda's mind, which makes his mind not too distant from a mosquito's cognition. His flimsy self-righteousness is the basis for his "philosophy" of primeval *revanchisme*. But Mr. Alda is an actor *and* a liberal, thus his face *and* his words must be rammed down our throats—according to the despotic forces of the media's feudal liberalism. Mr. Reagan was once an actor, good-looking, boyish and fresh, but he was not a liberal so he could not grace the cover of *McCall's*. The American media credit themselves with impartiality and reason, rather than feudal mystique. But Congressman Crane is even better looking than Alda, Redford, Beatty or MacLaine. He has more to say about the relationship between compassion and the single citizen than all of them. How terrific he would look on the cover of *Ladies Home Journal* or *Cosmopolitan*! Fat chance . . . □

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of an antinazi network which he has constructed to keep a zealous but untrustworthy woman away from the genuine resistance is the cause of an actual murder. Fictions may have serious consequences in reality. But reality may also turn out to be more stubborn than the "idealists" believe. Brandys's hero bitterly criticizes the regime's monopoly over information, but recent Polish experience demonstrates that people may retain a residual sense of reality which the most artful intellectual manipulation cannot eliminate. Djilas admires Tito at bottom because he was victorious; he despises Tito's great opponent, Draža Mihajlović, because he was defeated, and speaks sarcastically of his "heroic legend" created by "Western propaganda." But the jury of history is still out on the question of whether reality can be created through political manipulation buttressed by raw physical power, as Tito and Djilas believed, or whether pluralistic reality in its intellectually less elegant but still sturdy democratic forms—the sort in which Mihajlović and Brandys's narrator placed their trust—will ultimately prevail. □

Robber Barons Reconsidered

Saul Engelbourg: *Power and Morality: American Business Ethics, 1840-1914;* Greenwood Press; Westport, Connecticut.

by Frederick R. Dempsey

Power and Morality is an examination of the trends in the behavior of big businessmen from the era popularly considered the age of robber barons. One might expect more bad news than good; perhaps even endless accounts of the abuse of power and shameless subjections of morality to the pursuit of profit. After twenty years of research, however, Saul Engelbourg has an entirely different interpretation. In fact, he argues that this period witnessed a dramatic *improvement* in business ethics.

Under consideration are the years between 1840 and 1914, when America's essentially localized, agricultural economy developed into one dominated by large, industrial corporations. By 1914, the transformation was complete: many of America's major corporations were already in existence; the fortunes and reputations of Vanderbilt, Gould and Rockefeller had been made, and America was a fully industrialized society. But the emergence of this new economy disrupted a balance of power that had existed between buyers and sellers. Economies of scale now centered enormous power in the hands of men whose moral values had been formed in a simpler age.

As the economy developed it became clear that the business ethics of the pre-1840 era were inadequate to guide businessmen in their new circumstances. Conflict of interest is a case in point. What had once been acceptable behavior for the sole proprietor of a business (e.g. special discounts to friends or valued clients) became a moral issue when the man was the president of a corporation. His first responsibility then was to the stockholders. However, a man schooled in the past era was accustomed to thinking of the company's interests in terms of his own. He found himself caught between conflicting values. The dilemma here rests on the failure to grasp the distinction between owners and managers, a point that might seem obvious to us today, but which was something barely comprehended in the middle of the 19th century.

Engelbourg would not necessarily condemn the behavior of the man in our conflict-of-interest case, even if by favoring the valued client he breaks modern canons of ethical conduct. To judge him thus would be anachronistic. The author would first determine whether the action was in conflict with "standards of the particular business element involved and those of business in general," or whether it conflicted with "standards of business in general and those of society as a whole." The man still might deserve censure, but the judgment would be based on criteria that accounted for the acceptable practices of the day.

With his principles for moral evaluations thus clearly defined, Engelbourg sets out to discover whether business morality did in fact change between 1840 and 1914, and if so, what caused this change. He focuses his study on the behavior of business leaders in five areas of action involving moral decisions: conflict of interest, restraint of trade, competitive tactics, stock watering and financial reporting. Furthermore, he divides the era itself into three subperiods: 1840 to 1880, when large industrial corporations first emerged; 1880 to 1900, when the federal government started to regulate business activities; and 1900 to 1914, when the world of high finance began dominating the newly industrialized economy.

The detailed nature of Engelbourg's structured, unbiased and well-documented analysis contrasts sharply with the treatment this complex period has received in the past. Matthew Josephson, who caricaturized the era's magnates of wealth and power as *robber barons,* dismissed nearly the entire lot of them as men who "tended to act without those established moral principles which fixed more or less the conduct of the common people of the community." Without proving such a sweeping assertion, or even defining what were the common standards of the community, Josephson—and all those who mouth his arbitrary denunciation—foist upon

Mr. Dempsey is the assistant managing editor of Immaculata, *a journal published in Libertyville, Illinois.*

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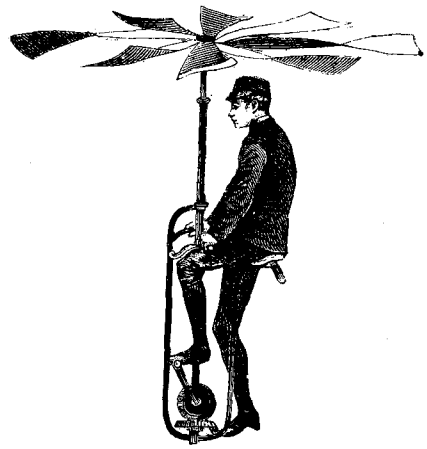
us a questionable and damning interpretation of actual historical figures.

Unlike Josephson, the author of *Power and Morality* believes that a hierarchy of moral development existed among the era's business titans. With adherence to the law as the minimum standard of morality, Engelbourg identifies several patterns of behavior. Among the lawbreakers, he distinguishes those who acted illegally whenever it was desirable and safe from others who did so only when it was an approved practice within their business element. Among law-abiders, there were those who obeyed grudgingly and those who observed not just the law but also a moral code of their own. Finally, there was a category of men best described as moral exemplars.

Such a man was John Murray Forbes. Possessing high ethical standards himself, Forbes sought to improve the code of conduct exhibited by his peers. Ample opportunity came his way in 1873 when, as a prominent figure at the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, Forbes was shocked to learn that other directors (and even the president) of the Burlington held inside contracts with the construction company that built the river roads. When the river roads failed to meet the interest payments on their bonds, these directors used their position to decide that Burlington money would be spent for this purpose, in effect enriching themselves at the expense of the railroads.

This sort of behavior was a far cry from Forbes's concept of corporate directors being "trustees for others," (i.e. the stockholders). By 1875, enough stockholders had rallied around Forbes's view to enable him to wage a successful proxy fight against the guilty directors, forcing them off the board. Known as the "revolution of 1875," this unprecedented event not only determined the Burlington's policy toward people in its service with conflicting outside interests; it also established in the process a higher standard of conduct for businessmen.



The revolution of 1875 is simply one example of moral progress in one area: conflict of interest. In this case the improvement sprang from a business insider's moral standards (and interests) coinciding with the interests of an increasingly powerful community of business outsiders (the stockholders); together they effected change. As the era wore on, business outsiders exercised an ever-greater influence over the insiders, whether directly as stockholders or indirectly in the form of public opinion. Eventually, the federal government stepped in at the demand of various business elements and the general public; first with the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887, which created administrative agencies to govern commerce; then with the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890, to guard against unlawful restraint of trade.

The contemporary reader is surely aware that the government became increasingly involved in business affairs, that the public still clamors for greater accountability, and that businessmen are more dependent than ever on each other's honesty. As it is today, so was the situation of 1914 in comparison to 1840. The actual moral progress involved here can in some degree be measured by the ascendancy and acceptance of more ethical standards of conduct. Was this indeed the state of business practices in 1914? Engelbourg summarized what his research had revealed:

> At the end of the period there was less conflict of interest than there had been earlier. Restraint of trade was delimited, although the structure of the American economy was not affected. Competitive tactics were modified, and certain practices virtually disappeared. Stock watering diminished in the railroads, although it continued to flourish elsewhere. Financial reporting improved, although much remained to be done.

While Saul Engelbourg has made a valuable contribution to scholarship, he has performed an even greater service to business, particularly big business, which bears an onus of disrepute. For one reason or another, many Americans consider business to be a selfishly motivated, suspicious, vaguely unethical enterprise; and the bigger the business, the more suspect it is. Engelbourg admits that *self-interest* has always been business's guiding principle, but he states "Never was it the sole guide." Business practices in this country have forever been restrained and directed by an ethical code. That code, nebulous though it is, has improved to such an extent that it can be noted in five specific areas of conduct. Engelbourg has documented this progress.

Power and Morality deserves close study. And not just by students of the field, or businessmen curious about the evolution of their ethical standards. This book has implications worthy of political consideration. Conservatives now have the evidence (for their defense of free enterprise) that the system has engendered moral as well as economic advance. Liberals will understand better when and how regulations and legislation have set good standards long before those standards were internalized by businessmen. Populists should take heart in the profound effects social pressures have had in determining ethical business practices. Only enemies of free enterprise itself will be distraught to learn that the system has worked so well. □

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Most Businessmen Have a Fairly Accurate Reading of Their Competition

How About Their Opposition?

The magazines and activist groups which mold and manipulate public opinion toward anti-capitalist goals are now big business. Their impact in recent years has grown more potent through a network of multinational support groups. The last election has given this activity a vibrant new impetus, with funds and memberships on the increase. There is now a much greater readiness to form coalitions among groups whose goals previously had seemed remote from one another.

It is clear that the conflict between the interests of the business community and these anti-capitalist forces is going to become more intense during the eighties.

Persuasion At Work is a newsletter specifically designed to keep the businessman apprised of the important developments in this opinion-making contest. Each month we offer an analysis of a publication, an organization or a movement pushing public attitudes one way or the other on an issue of importance to the business community.

These commentaries are drawn from direct sources including attendance at the meetings of activist groups, study of their promotional literature and monitoring of their periodicals.

Among the groups and issues that we've addressed in recent months:

Common Cause vs. PAC's or Business as the Fall Guy

"Thus the distaste which Common Cause holds for PAC's should come as no surprise. For it is primarily through such committees that the business community — badly mauled by the regulatory and fiscal excesses of the 1960's and 1970's — has found an effective political voice for restoring some balance and sanity to federal economic and regulatory policies. Common Cause, quite understandably, prefers fewer and less-assertive actors on the probusiness side of the political stage."

Philanthropy Proudly Raising the Banner of What in No-Man's Land? or Businessman, Alert!

"If IS [Independent Sector] uses its money, power, lobbying expertise and army of constituent members in behalf of the liberal ideology which has characterized the big foundations and the most determined elements of the nonprofit sector over the past quarter century, then the advent of IS is not good news for the business community."

Slick Anticapitalism at Your Corner Newsstand

"Much of the grist that is ground in the *Mother Jones* mill is, indeed, specifically anticorporate and anticapitalistic. The September 1980 issue has a feature story listed on the cover, 'Exxon Vs. The Sun,' accusing Exxon and other corporate giants of conspiring with the Department of Energy to prevent the development by small companies of low-cost solar energy systems. The previous issue carries a scathing attack on the safety record of a Bethlehem Steel plant in Maryland.

It is only in the context of these larger ideological goals that the businessman, or the housewife, can come to understand the motives and the biases and the range of carefully chosen subjects of a *Mother Jones* and the many ideologically allied, but less successful, periodicals and newspapers."

A Militant Challenge to the Business Community by its Unrecognized Friends

"It is our judgment that this is one group endeavor which will be gathering momentum in the months ahead. The corporations which may find themselves on the receiving end of its orchestrated complaints had best begin preparing their policy positions now. Moreover, what is at stake in this particular push for change is a rational and long-overdue challenge to the narrow concepts which generally have governed advertising policies in America. That is grist for the mental mills of every business enterprise.

CBTV [The Coalition for Better Television] is engaged in an effort which may help corporate advertisers to recognize that a free society cannot stay in business if each citizen sets his own rules and behaves as he sees fit, and that the nature of the television programs sustained by advertising is one of the most critical factors in tipping the balance toward civilized and productive living or social chaos and economic oblivion."

In this era when "corporate responsibility" has become a bludgeon used by activist groups to force corporations to meet their demands, a new level of understanding is needed by the businessman to hold his own in a kind of contest for which he has had little preparation.

Persuasion At Work is a sentinel resource to help guard a poorly protected flank.

As an introductory offer, we will send each new subscriber a gift copy of the booklet, "Corporate Responsibility: The Viability of Capitalism in an Era of Militant Demands." The subscription price is $8.00.

To order send check or money order to: The Rockford Institute, 934 N. Main St., Rockford, IL 61103.

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COMMENDABLES

A Respectable Effort

Robert Hughes: *The Shock of the New;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

In that kitchen of pretentious banality in the West Fifties that is *Time* magazine, one man stands out as a bona-fide critic amidst reviewers who only call themselves critics. His name is Robert Hughes, and he is a sort of Australian sophisticate, which many people would consider a contradiction in terms. Among the newest brand of reviewers—that is, critical mercenaries who sell their services to any cultural fashion that guarantees money and prestige—he looks different. *Time* seems to be an oasis for these "critical" postures in literature, pop music, movies and various cultural trends, with only theater and the arts having escaped their corruptive influence, probably because of the individualistic tendencies of critics who serve those departments. What Mr. Hughes does in his work is perhaps not too remarkable by the standards that have been established by philosophers of creativity from Aristotle to Benedetto Croce, but he at least attempts to establish a criterion and live honorably by its canon. He's not very subtle about his golden rule for beauty or rightness or wisdom, but at least he gropes for one; he does not shy away from common sense and he invokes his own taste carefully—which inspires confidence.

His book—aside from its magnificent illustrations and the superb wealth of splendid reproductions—gives a fairly honest overview of the history of modern art. He tries, in eight chapters, to answer many questions about the artistic avant-garde—the ancient and by now fully specious notion. He succeeds in many ways, although he does not formulate the two most pertinent questions: why did avant-garde, from the outset, sell out to leftish causes and become the most pathetic, doleful and ludicrous victim of leftists wherever they have come to power? And why have all the exertions of the avant-garde failed to establish any connection with the masses—of which the avant-gardists claimed to be servants and worshipers—other than through the bastardized cubist pattern on a Woolworth tie? Like so many of his predecessors, Mr. Hughes somehow missed an opportunity. □

IN FOCUS

Comparative Frolics

George Fredrickson: *White Supremacy;* Oxford University Press; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

White Supremacy is an interesting, if flawed, effort in comparative history. It is a treatment of the patterns of race relations in the United States and South Africa. Fredrickson sees them as linked, as two mixed-race settlement colonies where Africans or blacks were dominated by Protestant Northwest Europeans in a harsh, or at least distinctive, way. The slave-holding societies of Catholic Ibero-America, he argues, did not, at least *after* emancipation, manifest the peculiar rigidity of "white supremacy," a term he prefers, on rather unclear grounds, to racism.

Time and again, however, it is apparent that the U.S.-South Africa comparison is a slippery and tenuous affair. Fredrickson himself is repeatedly reduced to admitting that the social situations in the two countries are markedly different. Moreover, to his credit, Fredrickson does not, as has recently been fashionable, disregard the differences between the South and the rest of the United States, though he tends to minimize it. Attempts to draw parallels between the two countries frequently come to grief. After treating the post-Reconstruction South and the unification of South Africa under Boer domination, Fredrickson admits: "despite the apparent similarities of a white unification at the expense of nonwhite access to citizenry that occurred at the turn of the century in both the United States and South Africa, it is clear in retrospect that the underlying institutional and ideological imperatives pointed in opposite directions." He notes that postemancipation blacks in the U.S. were largely excluded from industry, while South African blacks became the backbone of industrialization. Racial segregation in the two countries was quite different: "Indeed these differences are of such degree as to cast doubt on the value of a detailed comparison of the unequal treatment of southern blacks during the Jim Crow era and the lot of Africans under segregation and apartheid since 1910."

The truth would seem to be that race relations in the U.S. and South Africa not only are, but always have been, fundamentally different. The fact that blacks have always been a minority in the U.S. (even though they have been a majority in some states and smaller areas) is, alone, a fundamental—not just statistical — difference. American whites do not much resemble South African whites; most of the latter are descended from a very small, isolated group of grim Calvinists who have largely been separated from the rest of Western civilization for two centuries. There is no ethnic split among American whites really comparable to that between Afrikaners and British South Africans. American blacks are a stratum or caste descended from ex-slaves, and they are Americans, recognizably part of the American people. South African blacks are actually a number of indigenous peoples, each with its own highly distinct culture; they were never chattel slaves, and it is unlikely that they regard themselves as part of the "same people" as the whites. As Fredrickson himself admits, it is the Colored minority, not the black majority, that resemble American blacks; even so, there are great differences between the two groups. While the color bar in the U.S. was always very rigid, the boundary between white and Colored in South Africa has usually been vague and permeable. (On the whole, the Coloreds seem to have been better treated than American blacks, until the apartheid era.)

Despite Fredrickson's arguments, comparisons between the U.S. and Latin America seem to be far more valid. Incidentally, if one can momentarily ignore obsessions with color

Dr. Levine is an historian in New York City.

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and race (modern liberals seem to find this almost as hard as do traditional bigots!), some remarkable resemblances appear between the pattern of minority domination in modern South Africa and that of old French Algeria—another place where a small group of Europeans settled among an overwhelmingly more numerous group of natives. Differences between Algerian Moslems and Frenchmen—both white—as well as the settler's arrogance generated ethnic barriers and explosive situations as in South Africa.

Nevertheless, this is a most interesting book; in spite of its strained and ultimately unconvincing thesis, it amasses an immense amount of useful information and produces some thought-provoking ideas. □

Partnering in America

Andre Dubus: ***Finding a Girl in America;*** David R. Godine Publishers; Boston.

by Art Petersen

If women are essentially different from men, clearly men are essentially different from women. This kind of wisdom dominates most of the stories and the novella of Andre Dubus's fourth book. There we discover that making contact with a mate and maintaining that contact are very difficult. In Dubus's world men and women are not only out of touch with each other and with life but also ill-prepared for it and incapable of learning from it. Moreover the men, fanatically absorbed with themselves, are irrevocably insular. Thus "the difference" between women and men becomes a major theme by omission. All of the women are young, naive and lonely or older, needful and lonely—as perceived from (except in one story) equally needy, fearful and extremely self-indulgent male points of view. In the novella, we find one baffled Hank Allison:

> He could not understand why she would make love with him while she was not interested in his work . . . He wondered why he was with her . . .'I just don't understand how you can feel for me, and know nothing about my life.'

Guilt and self-preoccupation dominate male conduct. Guilt assumes three forms: separation from children, deprivation of a child never born because of abortion, and prevention from work or credit for having done it. "At St. Croix" and "Winter Father" demonstrate the effects of the forced absence of children. In "At St. Croix" a "separated" father's former ability to swim becomes a horrifying inability, for "the wound he had opened in himself when he left them had never healed, and it never would." One wonders at his obsession with this wound, and one cannot help but observe that his obsession is more debilitating than his wound. In "Winter Father," ". . . he had remained a secret from them [the children of his former marriage]. What did they know about him?" Indeed, no more than he knows about himself, except that he aches for not being known. The metaphorical forms arrest, but the melancholy cloys.

In the novella, protagonist Hank becomes obsessed with the child his former lover, Monica, has aborted without telling him. He dreams about the unborn child, over and over: on the beach with him, lying on a blanket beside him, curled and smiling (another ingenious metaphor). Upon first hearing of the abortion from his new 19-year-old girlfriend, 35-year-old Hank excuses himself to the bathroom to vomit his horror, a horror he has earned. Had he really known Monica, perhaps she would have told him about her condition. While with her, Hank admits his presence is often in flesh but not in spirit.

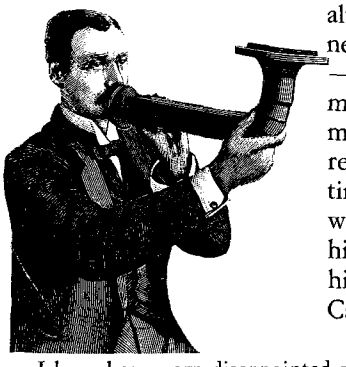
Through their work the men lose their women and their souls. In "The Misogamist" a drill Sergeant (World War II) chooses Army and whoring over Army and the girl who waits back home. And waits. Wives cannot be "squared away" as equipment and trainees can, and whores can be consumed as needed from time to time, like rations. In "The Pitcher" a baseball player of some talent is angered to learn just before the season's last game that his wife has fallen in love with a dentist. The problem seems to be that he has been pitching curves and fast balls, not so much in the park or on the road as in his mind when he lay with his wife in bed at night. And in the novella, writer/professor Hank turns to literature "for passion or excitement" and to work to earn "his day on earth." There was no place or time for anyone else, though he wanted there to be.

Despite 20th-century access to a vast culture (active, vital and alive with experiential wisdom), we have never been more isolated, estranged and violent. People look, but they don't understand or feel. The problem of isolation results primarily from a vast ignorance of our own nature and, perhaps, from inequities between men and women in

Dr. Petersen is professor of English at the University of Alaska, Juneau.

Social Register

When searching for elegance of expression, for a sense of tactfulness, discretion and chic in language, one should always look to the left. Witness how Mr. Dave Dellinger—that distinguished, well-mannered, impeccably dressed malefactor of the Vietnam era, refined visitor to Hanoi at the time American prisoners of war were being tortured by his courteous hosts—describes his feelings about events in Cambodia:



> I have been very disappointed with the whole Kampuchea thing.

Admirable, isn't it? How else could one speak of one's close friends, who just happened to butcher an entire nation, and still preserve the poised stance of an elder statesman for all the unwashed but good people in America? □

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our society. In the Dubus novella, Hank and his last woman enter marriage without meaningful connection (without empathy), lured on by the chimera of peace. Such ritualistic form without content, as we have discovered in our time, desiccates the soul and drives us from one another in thirst and in anguish, our spirits shriveled. For women this plight is more understandable than for men, who co-create these meaningless connections and marriages after having journeyed upriver for millennia. They bear a greater responsibility for this destructive illusion. The condition is indeed depressing, especially when writers, the mediums of human experience, supposedly have the truth tacked up before them and ponder each day the nature of life in this world. □

WASTE OF MONEY

The Idyllic Life of Sabotage

George Millar: ***Road to Resistance;*** Little, Brown & Co.; Boston.

by Barbara Worden

This book is the autobiography of prominent British journalist and writer George "Josh" Millar. A paragraph of the introduction, set during the author's return to the French village of Vieilley, site of his World War II work with the French resistance, defines the parameters of the book. Millar has just climbed up to the second floor of a barn belonging to one of his former comrades:

> My hand lit on a nest of eggs . . . I lifted out the nearest . . . A heavy lethal egg, a British-made Mills grenade. It was I who had left them there all those years ago, for I sometimes slept there, high up on the hay . . . I wandered to the edge of the forest, but failed to find the earliest *maquis* site. Somewhere in that tangle of greenery were the remains of the *le gros* Berger . . . I turned back to the village . . . The place felt like home. Why had I not settled there, bought a farm, after the war? Why had I abandoned Vieilley after the village had given me so much happiness? What sort of a creature had I been when I kept grenades under the eaves? And before?

Mr. Millar asks two basic questions which his book intends to answer. His explanation gives me a sense of distaste for both this book and the person who wrote it.

George Millar is always a taker. Furthermore, he is a taker in a seriously limited sense. Autobiographies by people who uninhibitedly suck life's orange dry have a delight of their own: accounts as frivolous as those of Barbara Howar and Mae West are cases in point. Mr. Millar is in the sad company of those who take one bite out of one section of life's orange and then leave the remainder drying and molding on the plate after having ruined the orange for everybody else.

Most of Millar's description of his early life follows the "taste a bit and throw the rest away" philosophy. Experiences —the death of his father, his first lover, his Cambridge years, his first job as an architect— are constantly examined and rejected as not quite juicy enough for his exacting taste. These experiences are rejected not on the sympathetic grounds that they were bad for him, creating some sort of intellectual or psychological damage, but simply because they did not come up to expectations. These expectations are, of course, never seriously challenged; after all, it's his book. The reader simply has to go along, if reluctantly, with them. Toward the end of the book, when he is escaping from the nazis after being interned in an Italian prison camp, he describes the following incident:

> We, of course, had to keep stopping. The Americans had been hidden, some of them for months, in Paris, and were unfit as well as footsore. The Belgian simply could not keep up. I left him, a sick, angry and exhausted old man by the roadside. He smelled horribly of drink, and was already asleep when I hurried after the others.

And there the Belgian is, deserted by the book as well as by the author.

Millar's work obeys the truism that the style is the man, but in this case I was overwhelmed by the conviction that the man is not one I would care to know in real life, nor is he one who is interesting as the subject of literature. Yet everything about his description of his time indicates that he was just having the time of his life. There are some things that should not be fun for any feeling, thinking person, and resistance work against the nazis comes dangerously close to them. A feeling of satisfaction for a job well done, yes. Fun, definitely no. When one of his young colleagues is killed by the nazis, Millar's main emotional response to the event is a self-pitying complaint that "the Nono tragedy was really the end of my idyllic life of sabotage." □

Dr. Worden is professor of communications at Friends Bible College in Haviland, Kansas.

Inane Revisionism

Daniel Singer: ***The Road to Gdansk;*** Monthly Review Press; New York.

The Road to Gdansk provides a view of contemporary Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union through the goggles of an anti-Soviet, revolutionary Marxist. It consists of three articles. The first is an unsuccessful attempt to defend Marxism and revolution against Solzhenitsyn's criticism. The other two deal with the future of the Soviet bloc, expressing Singer's hope that revolutionary struggles in West-

In the Mail

Drug Abuse in the Modern World: A Perspective for the Eighties **edited by Gabriel G. Nahas and Henry Clay Frick II; Pergamon Press; New York.** A collection of speeches presented to an international symposium held at Columbia University in 1980. It includes papers by authors such as Leopold Tyrmand and Harold Voth, as well as numerous physicians, educators and other experts in the field.

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ern Europe and those of the dissidents and workers in the East can somehow be unified. While he admits the truth of Solzhenitsyn's view of Stalin's Russia, and regards the post-Khrushchev era as a dead end, Singer's own view of Soviet history is incoherent. He rejects the Soviet and Chinese models but still regards the October Revolution as a "progressive" event, and he indicts the Western proletariat and its leaders for not coming to the rescue of the Bolsheviks. He retails the "caveman-to-steel-industry" version of Soviet industrialization. Singer denies the equation of Lenin with Stalin but admits that the "seeds" of Stalinism were sown earlier. Yet he fails to discuss seriously the problems this raises.

Much of the book suggests that Singer's mind remains mired in the world view of late-60's French leftism; he agonizes over how "Western propaganda had seized the gulag adroitly as an effective weapon to demoralize its young rebels." Soviet aggressiveness is not dangerous in itself, he claims, but it may promote the revival of America as an "international gendarme." He gloats over the alleged return of "the classical capitalist crisis." *The Road to Gdansk* contains some interesting discussions of the situation in the Soviet bloc, but there is nothing in it that has not been better treated by minds independent of Marxist blinkers. (AJL) □

The Traps of Symbolism

Marilynne Robinson: *Housekeeping;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Marilynne Robinson calls her book "a novel," yet it reads like an extended poetic meditation in prose. Its fusion of poetic and narrative treatments solicits a more engaged examination of a symbol than poetry alone can provide. But at the same time the narrative strains against the poetry, causing us to question the poetic strategy more than we would if it had been presented as a fragment of experience—a moment of strange synthesis, concentrated passion or sudden insight. Readers of narrative want to know what the circumstances are that arouse poetic feeling, and they want to see how the tensions contained in poetic contemplation will be resolved in action. Robinson bravely chooses the form which will put the most pressure on her ideas.

The novel is set in a town beside a lake suspended in the Idaho mountains. The lake, which rises in spring to ruin parlors and the feminine handiwork of draperies and needlepoint cushions, is the chief presence in the novel, a symbol which conveys the author's various themes. Robinson questions the permanence of human social institutions—in particular, of households and families—and the consequence of such questioning is to doubt the reality of the self.

The incessant metaphorical procedure of the book is to liken human experience to natural flux. The narrator—orphaned when her mother, abandoned by her husband, deliberately drives a car into the lake—falls under the care of first a grandmother, then two fretful and unwilling great-aunts and finally her mother's sister Sylvie.

Beautiful as this prose is, it fails to cause us to accept the eradication of distinctions between human order and an impinging wildness. We finally perceive that the narrator wants the child to consent to her own destruction. When the young girl and her aunt leave the home town to become homeless drifters, escaping by night over the railroad trestle across the lake, their disappearance is taken for suicide. It is, in fact, something like that. As a hobo, the narrator tells us, she listened to other people's stories but made no story of her own—except for this poem called a novel, which records the process of her dissolution. (ET) □

Liberal Soft Tyranny

Jane J. Mansbridge: *Beyond Adversary Democracy;* Basic Books; New York.

If *Beyond Adversary Democracy* were not so uniformly boring, a lover of freedom might have reason to fear its cultural impact. Running throughout its tortured prose is a continuing argument in favor of what Tocqueville called "soft tyranny," the application of social pressure in a democratic society to create cultural conformity. Ms. Mansbridge would not shudder at this state of affairs. Indeed, she would probably welcome it as a necessary step in transforming what she considers our "adversary democracy" into a regime more to her liking.

She laments the fact that the American polity was set up to reflect and mediate between various conflicting interests. This institutionalization of adversarial relationships was something which James Madison vigorously defended in making the case

for the federal Constitution. Curiously enough, Mansbridge, who teaches political thought, makes only two passing references to Madison, the founding father most closely associated with the concepts she attacks. In her judgment, adversarial politics has kept America morally disunited; except in the face of pressing military emergency, Americans have found it difficult to identify the public good.

Her analysis certainly applies to the modern American state which has expanded in a cancerous fashion to accommodate multiple minority and "public interest" groups. Yet it would be hard, if not impossible, to cite examples of adversary democracy ravaging the prewelfare American state. A government, such as ours once was, which confines itself to defending its citizens and to regulating, rather than controlling, commerce can resist takeover by powerful social interests. Such a government may bend in special cases toward one set of interests or another, but it will not be authorized to throw continuing political weight to one social group or to impose major disabilities upon another. Nor will it feel obliged to redistribute earnings or social benefits from one economic segment to another. Following an Anglo-American notion of limited government, Presidents Wilson and Hoover stressed the role of the executive as an honest broker amidst conflicting economic interests. They conceived of the state as a dispassionate mediator and would no doubt have been contemptuous of what the federal government has since become: a mob of bureaucrats

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with little public accountability, using political coercion and financial blackmail to favor some groups to the disadvantage of others.

Mansbridge's alternative to this degenerate regime is more of the same. She would yield more power to bureaucrats and social engineers who, she trusts, would eliminate commercial competition and set the agenda for public decision-making. Despite her unctuous homage to Athenian democracy and New England town meetings, her conception of self-government owes more to Lenin's democratic centralism than to either Pericles or John Adams. In one section, she contrasts the American, Japanese and Soviet understandings of the role of government with her own plan for unitary, or consensual, democracy. In this comparison the Soviets come out looking more democratic than the Americans by virtue of their greater willingness to remove economic competition. Mansbridge's preferred regime is only a sentimentalized variation of the way totalitarians extort popular backing for their policies.

During the McCarthy period, Willi Schlamm, a German-Jewish refugee from Hitler and a Burkean conservative, observed that the McCarthyites were fighting for a principle which many of them perceived only dimly. Morally ordered liberty was this principle: the Western world had a duty to call to account those who preferred totalitarianism to freedom. Unfortunately Senator McCarthy did not pursue this principle in a prudent fashion, and the defeat of anticommunism as a cause carried ominous consequences for the American people. Once they began to lose sight of the crucial distinction between free and servile societies, Americans abandoned much of their will to fight Soviet imperialism.

Because one can believe in the validity of Schlamm's argument, one must also regret that Mansbridge is gaining professional recognition by, among other things, deprecating the idea of

a free society. Above all else, one despises her quintessentially liberal deviousness in trying to push us into the Gulag while ostensibly recommending New England participatory democracy. As one staggers disgustedly through her book, it becomes apparent how quickly her pleas for voluntary equality turn into a defense of dictatorship. Soft tyranny, as Tocqueville reminds us, does have a way of turning hard and brutal. (PG) □

Trash

Shere Hite: ***The Hite Report on Male Sexuality;*** Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

We usually do not dwell on the debris which litters the so-called "free market of ideas" in the world's most advanced democracy. Occasionally, however, the magnitude of the cultural swindle attracts our attention and seems to deserve notice. Ms. Hite is one of the most successful operators on the current scene of sexology—a "science" so absurd that it would be an endless source of black humor except for its dire social and existential consequences to the victims of that new snake-oil peddling. Ms. Hite's methodology and her manipulation of both knowledge and ideas would be objects of amusing scorn in other, saner, times. But in our era they are made Book of the Month Club selections and receive immense printings by allegedly respectable publishers. Thus instead of actually reviewing Ms. Hite's "work," it seems more proper to quote *New York* magazine, whose editorial attitude might lead one to expect this publication to be Ms. Hite's admiring ally:

> Despite a mammoth documentary bonanza and the best of intentions, *The Hite Report on Male Sexuality* is a travesty of sex research. The 41 pages that Shere Hite actually wrote should be read with an eye to their basic errors and ideological crudities. □

What's Happening in Poland?

The dissolution of the communist infrastructure of power in Poland can be attributed to countless factors, yet it seems that the demise of the sacrosanct moral premise of Marxism as an ideology was predetermined. It must be stressed that what Marx, Engels and Lenin preached achieved global and historical success not thanks to its economic and political prescriptions (which early on proved to be erroneous and flimsy) but thanks to its moral premise. From the middle of the last century until very recently Marxism was regarded by its followers as the ultimate quest for justice in the modern world. Certainly Stalin shattered that myth in many minds, but not until communism had degenerated in Poland to a Mafialike system of extorting a sort of daily ransom from an entire nation could Marxism as a moral faith be entirely dismissed. Before the Soviets' expansion during World War II, peasant nations like Hungary, Romania or Lithuania had overwhelmingly rejected communism. In Poland, communism was deeply hated, and rabid anticommunism was instinctive for the masses, who had never forgotten the 1920 Bolshevik invasion; it was also an object of scorn among the other strata of the Polish society. Thirty-five years of postwar communism—in which the quest for justice transmogrified into abject oppression, and the "most modern" economic system turned into a parody of an economy—resulted in its becoming a cruel caricature, less feared than despised. The Communist Party rode to power in Eastern Europe on Russian bayonets, but developed different political traditions. The Polish party quickly identified itself in the popular perception as an organized crime syndicate rather than as a doctrinaire despot. And the Catholic Church continued to demonstrate that a moral message can be a serious proposition. In such an environment the Marxian moral argument was perpetually on the verge of grotesquery. By the end of the 1970's, it was obvious that there was no need to take seriously either the argument or those who kill in its name. □

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Pasolini's Retrospective

The Decameron, Canterbury Tales, Arabian Nights; **Written and directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini; United Artists Classics.**

by Eric Shapearo

Pier Paolo Pasolini was an Italian director who was murdered a few years ago in a sordid homosexual incident. He, his life and his work can serve as a sort of flattened emblem of what has happened to art cinema in the clutches of European *gauchisme.* The leftism of post-World War II movie-makers in Italy, France, England and later Germany has become like consumption was for the 19th-century romantics: ultimately, in lieu of tragicalness, it endowed their output with a sort of sinister grotesqueness. The open procommunism of the Italian neorealists, the sophistry of Trotskyite and Maoist deviations of the late French *Nouvelle Vague* all ended in freakishness and nihilism, neonaturalistic cruelty and sexual aberrations, a refurbished anti-bourgeois passion in a world chemically devoid of *epiciers,* philistines and bourgeois bluenoses.

Pasolini was certainly not the most interesting member of that group—he lacked Rosselini's inventiveness, Fellini's magnitude of artistry, De Sica's refinement of humanness, Truffaut's ironic warmth, Antonioni's cold elegance, David Lean's literariness, even De Santi's sincerity of commitment to left-wing causes. Pasolini's career began with socrealistic tales about the misery of the Italian working classes (which, by that time, were headed toward *petit bourgeois* affluence). He experimented with neo-Catholic "revolutionary" revisionism and ended up portraying pornographic neopaganism as a reinterpretation of Western culture. A lamely ambitious sexuality (mostly homosexuality) emerges from his work as a sort of cultural fetishism, maniacal in its intellectual limitation; it looks like politics in the pseudoprofound cinematic treatises of Godard. His retrospective in New York featured his last three movies—*The Decameron, Canterbury Tales* and *Arabian Nights*—and each is an attempt to say something by someone who has nothing but banality to say.

His hand is sure when he recreates the crudities of history; he certainly has a feel for the visual texture of the Oriental and European Middle Ages. His vision rings true in his rendition of Bocaccio; here he is on the familiar ground of images and sounds instilled in him by his Italianness. Unfortunately, he does not reveal Bocaccio in all his literary richness: he tells only the *Playboy* or *Penthouse* version of *Decameron.* His studs and lascivious nuns do not lust, they perform jaded rites of the counter-cultural orgies of the 1960's. The naked bodies that fill the screen in these three films have no life; they are pseudoerotic slogans in which eroticism, bawdiness and sensuality are supposed to have some sort of poeticality, but they impart only speciousness and boredom. The rancid gravy of aestheticism kills the authenticity of human impulses with which Bocaccio and Chaucer, pioneers of antischolasticism, assured themselves places in the history of literature. There's no Botticelli or Veronese in Pasolini's female nakedness; each of his "maidens," even those determinedly stylized to embody adolescent freshness and innocence, exudes something overwhelmingly sluttish.

One tries to find what exactly is so repulsive in this often visually flawless film-making; it's not easy, but finally one discovers that the reality Pasolini constructs is either plastic beauty à la Hollywood or repelling freakishness à la Woodstock—with nothing in between. Normalcy is excised from humanity, from man's and woman's looks, instincts, reactions, mental processes. Finally, it is a world of pneumatic sexuality, a giant collective fornication by naked slapstick figures who jump, leap, pratfall, copulate, huff and puff grotesquely. One imagines that the Keystone Cops in the buff in a brothel would do the same job. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

C'mon, Art . . .

Here is what Professor Doctor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in an article in the *Wall Street Journal,* has to say about how the liberals have saved capitalism in America despite the savage immorality of the capitalists:

> The rich have doctors on Park Avenue; the rest of us look at the mounting medical bills and yearn for national health insurance.

Here we witness a curious case of mythomania. Compounding Professor Schlesinger's remuneration from teaching, writing, lecturing and adorning the pages of women's mags as an intel-celeb (the Learned Foot) adds up to a rather pretty income, probably quite close to that of a corporate chieftain. Doesn't he recognize in spite of all his brilliance, that defending the poor does not automatically make one poor? How many in liberal America have become rich by being so adamantly for the poor? □

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THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

El Salvador or Analogies

The El Salvador story brings back memories of Vietnam—so goes the stereotypical ditty in countless comments by the minigurus that are mass-produced by the American press. The Reagan administration vehemently denies that either their reminiscences or their analogies have any validity. And both sides do what they always do: they ignore the historical perspective and instead pursue succinct simplifications in the belief that the more shallow the argument is the more convincing it is. Which imbues us with a conviction that another exhaustive, acrimonious national debate on the Vietnam War is inevitable. We feel that such a debate is more than just proper—it is necessary. The sooner it reopens and the broader its scope the better for us all.

We would suggest a back-to-basics approach. To our mind, Vietnam and El Salvador (and all the other instances in between of Soviet rape of international decency which have been meekly accepted by the American establishment) belong to the same pattern, which future historians will describe as the distinct Soviet plan for long-range geopolitics. It originated with Lenin, was refined by Trotsky (but not in detail, which cost him his life) and was idiosyncratically implemented by Stalin in his doctrine of global subversion by way of semantic intrigues and an imperialistic foreign policy.

Like almost every good, complicated story, it begins with an original sin. The sin was committed (twice) by Roosevelt and Churchill—once in Teheran and again in Yalta. It consisted of dividing the world into two spheres of influence. The two Western gentlemen, conveniently forgetting their own politico-moral principles, discreetly refrained from asking what their Eastern counterpart would do with his prerogatives. Thereby FDR and Churchill perpetrated an act of international immorality and—as always—the sons were destined to pay for the sins of the fathers. Both Roosevelt and Churchill assumed that, regardless of its nefariousness, they had struck a gentlemen's agreement. But Stalin had ideology up his sleeve and in his holster. This little difference absolved him, in his own eyes and those of his Western left-liberal sympathizers, from any code of honor, even a gangster's honor. So he subjugated Eastern Europe by force, to the disgust of the two distinguished Wasps, who had expected at least a modicum of delicacy. He immediately invaded the territory which he had promised to respect as Western, or at least neutral, turf. And here is where semantics come in: whatever gross and blatant abuse (in Iran, 1946; Greece and Turkey, 1947; and later in Asia and Africa) was engineered by special NKVD (later KGB) teams for "internationalist cooperation," supported with Soviet money, weapons and organizational know-how, such well-concealed aggression was called "social change," "new times," "new realities," "regional mass movements," "anticolonialism" and, finally, "people's wars of liberation."

Such beautiful terms elicited an orgy of adoration from the liberal left all over the Western world. What Stalin himself would not have expected was that even the most perspicacious liberals would fall for the sham of historical spontaneity in every uprising of the "exploited." Not long ago Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. elucidated for the *Wall Street Journal* (for the 381st time) his disbelief in Soviet planning of world crises. Any native of Moscow, Warsaw, Sofia, etc. could inform him that there are central committees from the Kremlin to Bulgaria where a "Section of Fraternal Mutual Aid" works feverishly on how to accomplish subversion—in the Virgin Islands or Costa Brava or Iceland or Ohio State University or El Salvador—by remote, even surrealistic, proxies and calculates how such "help" can advance the Soviet Union in fulfilling the "dreams" of the world's working class. The bottom line is that although the U.S.S.R. does not *create* revolutionary conditions in, say, Guatemala, or organize an upheaval, it is pleasantly "surprised" when one happens. And official Soviet rhetoric will always encourage such upheavals: they send "fraternal" ammunition to kill the oppressive juntas which, in turn, perform savage retribution on everyone in sight. The vicious circle begins, and the U.S.S.R. has nothing to lose from its constant motion. And liberals in America ardently pin the blame on whomever the Soviets wish.

This perception of events in remote countries eventually created an awesome, destructive and vicious force for the Soviets—the suicidal naiveté of the Western liberal. Within the only country capable of thwarting Soviet designs, a power emerged which drew its impetus from the noblest traditions of American freedom, from democratic respect for such sacrosanct ideals as human rights and the freedom to dissent—a power which has proved to be essential to the Soviet's imperialistic expansion. That which was unthinkable to Roosevelt and Churchill in their musings in Yalta—an open communist bridgehead in the Western hemisphere—has materialized in Cuba. Because of *that* force, the gravity of liberal naiveté as an objective Soviet tool, liberal Presidents like Kennedy and Johnson were powerless against this anomaly.

Rarely have we seen a better example of that awesome might than in a recent essay in *The New Yorker*—that organ of *Courvoisier* radicalism of the American moneyed classes. It was an astonishing article, a paradigm of ex-

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quisite, fake objectivity, a gem with a factitiously "impartial" tone and cool, pseudoscholarly reasoning. It was written by a certain Richard J. Barnet, co-founder of the Institute for Policy Studies, an overtly procommunist publishing center in Washington, D.C. that has for two decades engaged in the subtle promotion of Soviet geopolitical goals by means of allegedly apolitical activities. Here is what Mr. Barnet attempted to drive into the consciousness of *New Yorker* readers:

1) That the U.S. is militarily stronger than the U.S.S.R., thus justifying the latter in any military build-up it chooses to pursue;

2) That there exists a polycentrism of geopolitical decisions in the communist camp (Mr. Barnet claims that Cuba intervened in Angola "without consulting" the Soviet Union and that North Vietnam's interests are not "identical" with those of the U.S.S.R.— both allegations sound, to an Eastern European or a Russian, like a grim joke told by a village idiot);

3) That the Soviet Union is disliked, rejected and slighted by the leadership of its client states in Africa and Asia (Mr. Barnet does not, however, explain why all those states form a rigidly unified front at every international forum, executing any Soviet order regarding strategic facilities or amenities for Soviet-manipulated traffic in arms).

The last is the most underhanded allegation. By relentlessly promoting it, the liberal gentlemen from the Eastern establishmentarian circles of *The New Yorker* stripe have reached an unusual instrumentality for the Soviet cause— they completely isolate this nation from the fundamental truths of our time. Such as:

—The supreme (and by now only) goal of the Soviet Union is not a world free from capitalist exploitation but the total destruction of the United States as the only existing society which is not only a *better, freer* and more *equal* society than that of the U.S.S.R., but also one which is able to defend itself militarily. The existence of a superior democratic institution with an infinitely superior economic system is the single most deadly threat to Russian communism.

—America's destruction can be completed only through a combination of internal subversion and global assault. As to the latter, it's enough to look at a world map to see what has happened since 1945, changes which were oiled and facilitated by Soviet global subversion. During the Vietnam War (according to the liberal press) neither J. Edgar Hoover nor the CIA could produce any evidence of Soviet subversion, as Lyndon Johnson asked them to do. This, of course, is a matchless Soviet triumph. In the eyes of people "from over there," such lack of proof proves only the ineptness of American security organizations and their ignorance of 19th-century Russian literature. It also proves that the Russians, white or red, are much cleverer at political intrigue, deception and strategy than their Western counterparts — American political conceptualists could have learned that from Joseph Conrad, who wrote about it in English, if they had to eschew the subtleties of Dostoyevsky and Merezhkovsky, which may perish in translation. The CIA's lack of proof only proves that Americans do not understand Russian-Soviet methods, not that subversion did not and does not take place. Thus, when small-time African political thugs come to New York at our expense, condemn us in the U.N. and vote with the U.S.S.R. on every issue, to ask the CIA "why?" is a waste of time. A Warsaw cabbie or a Budapest waiter could come up with a better explanation.

In light of what has happened in the world since the end of the Vietnam War, to say that there is no evidence of Soviet manipulation of the antiwar movement in the United States borders on insanity. Neither Jane Fonda nor Ramsey Clark would have set foot in Hanoi without the consent of the Soviet embassy, who had meekly checked with the proper office in Moscow. Only then did the Vietnamese get their instructions on how to handle Comrade Fonda and Citizen Clark, how these "useful idiots" (Lenin's favorite term for Western liberals) should help once they were back in California and Manhattan. For details, the CIA might ask a trolley conductor in Prague or a Rumanian fruit vendor —all those little gimmicks and Byzantine exercises to corrupt a society by feeding on both naiveté and wickedness have been thoroughly tested in Eastern Europe for 35 years.

These are some sad reflections that come to us as we read the latest outpouring of cynicism, hatred, viciousness and bottomless stupidity from the left-liberal press like *Village Voice,*

What should a businessman, an executive, a corporate officer take into consideration when he thinks about himself, his family, his business, the world around him?
Persuasion At Work **offers options to think about.**
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The Progressive, Mother Jones et alii on the subject of El Salvador. *The Nation,* that organ of rabid, vicious humanitarians, labeled its report on El Salvador "Invented Red Menace" in a front-page headline. What else could be added to the next chapter in the story of Soviet imperialism and American liberals' burning desire to nourish it?

A Matter of Perspective

There's a considerable amount of bitterness, if not outrage, in the liberal press—from the daily tabloids to *The New Yorker*—at Mr. Edward Meese's (President Reagan's right-hand man) remarks about the American Civil Liberties Union. He called it a "criminal's lobby."

At first glance, this characterization looked a bit harsh to us. After all, the ACLU was conceived as a protection of the citizens' privileges that were institutionalized in the Constitution, and at the outset of its existence it participated in many glorious efforts which succeeded in securing justice for those who might otherwise have been denied it. However, with the passing years, the ACLU has begun to show signs of degeneration in the way it applies its philosophy of liberty, civil rights and equity to what can be called the encroaching social climate. In an era when teen-age girls who, when they feel bored, kill schoolchildren, when juvenile street gangs rob elderly people of a couple of dollars and then carve them to pieces with pocket knives, not to eliminate witnesses but for the sheer pleasure of butchering, the ACLU's rhetoric often gives an impression of heinous scholasticism. Moreover, many people (and we are among them) feel that the ACLU's very triumphs—devoid of any respect for the rational practicalities of social existence—have helped to breed the aforementioned girls and juveniles, rendering them ignobly contemptuous of courts, sentences, law enforcement, any moral exigency of their society. As of now, in the eyes of many—and in our eyes as well—the ACLU looks like a fanatical association of legal gurus who read the law not in order to defend human life and common sense but to satisfy the empty, ossified, lugubrious schemes of some repulsive orthodoxy. It pains us to feel this way, and we believe that many noble principles which prompted the ACLU's formation in America are thus abused by our feelings. But it's not our fault—nor is it Mr. Meese's.

Nelson Algren, RIP

Nelson Algren died. He was a serious and gifted writer whose work we disliked and admired in the same breath. We respected his literary instincts and his fascinating excursions into a reality which he explored with a God-given passion for cognizance and depiction. But we deplored his adherence to ideologies which we believe are erroneous and destructive. Algren was faithful to the writer's sacrosanct mission—the search for truth and wisdom. However, not *all* truths or *all* wisdom that a writer may find on his pilgrimage are of equal quality. Algren wrote in *The Man with the Golden Arm* that in America "ownership is a virtue," and he saw that as abhorrent. This, in our eyes, placed him in the ranks of shallow, cranky, 19th-century doctrinaires. We, the people of the last decades of the 20th century, know that there's nothing wrong with possession. It is an instinct highly developed and polished by humans, a source of industriousness and complex feelings, one of the basics of civilization. Morally, like every human trait, it has the potential for both good and bad, right and wrong. It is what we do with it that matters. Neither modern medicine nor Shakespeare's sonnets would be possible without it. And America has done with it both mischief and marvel—and the latter far outweighs the former. It's a pity that Algren, with his talent for the *mot juste,* didn't get to the heart of the matter.

Dimwits Back at Work

Some dimwits at Notre Dame protested President Reagan's commencement address. Others did the same to Vice President Bush at Howard University and to Secretary Haig in Syracuse. A *Chicago Tribune* columnist cried hosanna: "One side benefit of the Reagan administration is the arousal of what for years seemed to be a dead art: campus protest."

Looking at dimwits on the campuses and in the press, one can't help wondering at the substance of the ideological contention in America. It's obvious that since the 1960's the conservatives have become the most fiercely rational defenders of democracy, while the liberals are now the most unreasoning and sophistic destroyers of it. The conservatives invoke the ballot, the rights of the majority, social contract, discourse and the need for consensus on sociopolitical matters. They abide by the authority of liberal Presidents and call them *their* Presidents, once they are elected. The liberals worship dissent, protest, nonnegotiable demands; they claim superior wisdom about right and wrong and express contempt for any proceeding that involves compromise. They have a despotic faith in their own moral perfection and their divine right to bulldoze any liberal preference over any popular preference. The fact that Reagan was elected by a majority of the American voters will never induce liberals to consider him *their* President, and they reject any dialogue, opting instead to display a dimwitted scorn which they call "protest."

What did the fools at Notre Dame and their harebrained apologist in *Chicago Tribune's* pages protest against? An administration which is engaged in a gigantic effort to save for America the luxury of public dissent in a world which is crumbling under an alliance of totalitarian henchmen and terrorist murderers? □

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Apologia *Pro Domo Sua*

We at the *Chronicles of Culture* have repeated it from our birth. Perhaps at the beginning of the century the liberal in the universe of the American press represented the pursuit of truth and justice. But once he achieved power, he was on the moral skids until he hit bottom around the end of the 1960's. That was the triumphant era of New Journalism, advocacy journalism, investigative journalism. With a novel set of principles and guidelines, liberal journalism established its new role in the American culture by way of formidably monopolistic self-promotion. Hence the new press credo was not to discover and report on reality, but to correct it—that is, to shape this society's dreams, knowledge and mores. It ended in an abysmal *dégringolade* of the very substance of journalism. Prevarication, mendacity, hypocrisy, casuistry and outright lies became the very gist of that which is spuriously called editing, and the suppression of nonliberal points of view introduced a sense of totalitarian methodology in treating the news. The lies about Vietnam and Watergate (or the bending of both truth and reality) were so subtle that journalists could label it "freedom of expression" or "the variety of interpretations."

Now this spiritual empire of lies is beginning to unravel. After the Pulitzer Prize was awarded for a fabrication, the subsequent laureate, one Ms. Carpenter, has been accused of gross distortions in *her* Pulitzer-winning story. Then there is a certain Mr. Daly from the *New York Daily News* who, it seems, concocted a report from Northern Ireland in which he quoted people who never existed and vividly described events that never took place. Both Ms. Carpenter and Mr. Daly are alumni of the *Village Voice,* the cradle of New Journalism, press advocacy and merciless investigation. It is a bizarre journal, financed by a cynical capitalistic tycoon, a publication devoted at the same time to sexual degeneracy and political neo-Bolshevism. But it now seems clear that it is essentially a training center for well-heeled, trendy, brazen liars. □

Entente Cordiale

Don't they seem, at first glance, to be an odd couple? They surely do, but it is an illusion. Actually, there's a warm, tender understanding between *The New Yorker,* the flagship of moneyed, Westchester/Fairfield Counties-based supraclass of VSOP liberals, and *The Militant,* the fiery organ of unrepentant Trotskyite revolutionaries who still vow to shape the world according to the Programme of the Third International. The catalyst which demonstrates their misty-eyed mutual fondness for each other is Poland, 1981. Both eminent publications allotted space to lengthy, sentimental interviews with and divagations about the Solidarity movement. In neither piece did the noun "communism" or the adjective "communist" make a single appearance. Reading those elucubrations, one would not have the slightest idea that Poland is a communist society—forced to exist within the framework of a totalitarian state, conceived and structured upon a complex Marxist-Leninist theoretical basis according to strict communist doctrine which was devised and is ruled by people who call themselves communists. One would never know that the Polish workers and their Solidarity movement are heroically combating that doctrine, that state, that rule and those people who form the communist government. Not one vocable about such nastiness could be found in either *The New Yorker* or *The Militant.* According to the former, the Polish workers are fighting some nebulous "authority." According to *The Militant,* they are battling some enigmatic "bureaucrats." A simple, precise statement of communism's wretched failure will never pass the lips of an American archliberal or leftist. □

EDITOR'S COMMENT

(continued from page 5)

to be only hypocritical conventions. Yet the bourgeois culture venerated economic and social activism, worshiped creative energy, respected lawfulness, enforced a stable social order in which civilization, civility and civic values thrived—in short: it made existence a rewarding and meaningful experience.

Now we have a so-called mixed economy and a system of rewards that borders on insanity. Is the great wealth created today deserved? Should a moronic actor, a cynical manipulator of mass culture, a cretinous pop singer, a vulgar movie entrepreneur, a scoundrel of a publisher who sponges on murderous instincts be financially rewarded—as they are today, in a climate of anti-capitalism in which *any* system of values wilts?

I'm afraid that the haves and have-nots have no coherent answers to these questions. The have-somes seem to be deeply disappointed with the current economic arrangement. This is why history and the future await the have-somes' ascendancy to social, political and moral power.*

—Leopold Tyrmand

*This is a portion of a chapter from *The Prudent Progressive or An Arcadia of New Wisdom.*

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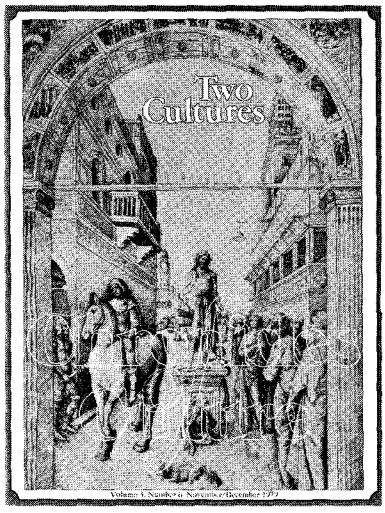

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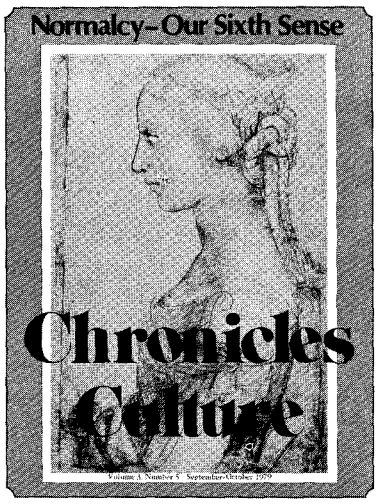

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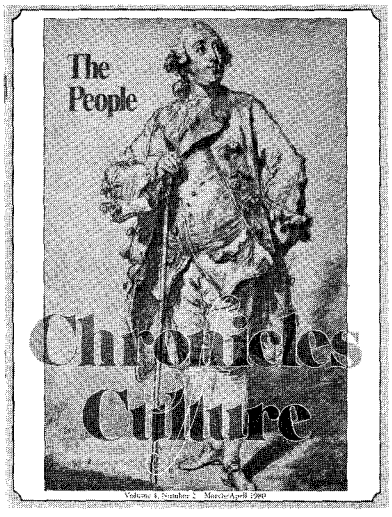
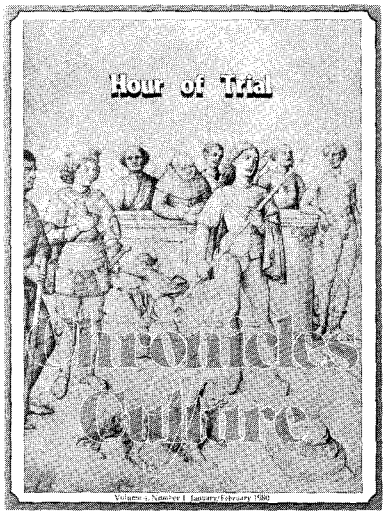
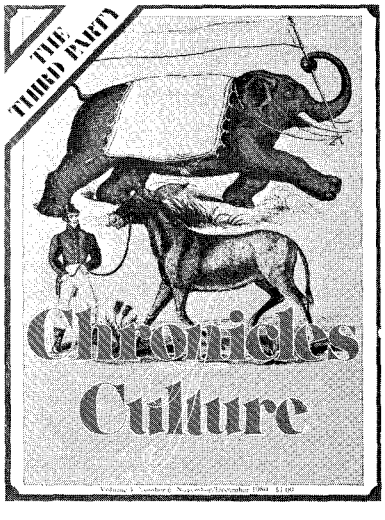


HOUR OF TRIAL



THE CONSERVATIVE PRINCIPLE

THE THIRD PARTY



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